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Propagating the Pestalozzian: The Story of William McClure's Involvement in Efforts to Affect Educational and Social Reforms in the Early Nineteenth Century

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PROPAGATING THE PESTALOZZIAN: THE STORY OF
WILLIAM MACLURE'S INVOLVEMENT IN EFFORTS
TO AFFECT EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL REFORMS
IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

By

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"Propagating the Pestalozzian:" The Story of William Maclure's Involvement in Efforts to Affect Educational and Social Reforms in the Early Nineteenth Century

Loyola University of Chicago, Ph.D. Dissertation
in Educational Foundations

ABSTRACT

The preface enumerates the reasons why William Maclure should be considered an important figure in social and educational history.

Chapter One: The known facts about William Maclure's childhood and early adulthood are delineated. Typical schools of his day are described.

Chapter Two: The relationship between Maclure and Pestalozzi is examined. Pestalozzi's school at Yverdon is described.

Chapter Three: This chapter is concerned with Maclure's first attempt to provide the United States with the Pestalozzian method by subsidizing the teaching and writing efforts of Joseph Neef, a disciple of Pestalozzi. Neef's Sketch of a Plan of a Method of Education is analyzed. Maclure's geological achievements are also described in this chapter.

Chapter Four: Maclure's renewed efforts to establish schools utilizing Pestalozzian methodology in Spain, France, and the United States are narrated.

Chapter Five: This chapter is devoted to an examination of the career and thought of Robert Owen, Maclure's future partner at New Harmony.

Chapter Six: The recruitment of Maclure by Robert Owen for the New Harmony experiment is related. Similarities in the two philanthropists' views are listed.

Chapter Seven: The trip by the boatload of scholars to New Harmony is described.

Chapter Eight: This chapter describes the "Preliminary Society," which was the label given the original organizational framework established by Robert Owen at New Harmony.

Chapter Nine: The Permanent Society, which replaced the Preliminary Society, is described.

Chapter Ten: Maclure's educational guidelines for the New Harmony schools' curriculum are delineated.

Chapter Eleven: Life in the New Harmony schools is examined, both from the standpoint of adult observers and the reminiscences of former pupils.

Chapter Twelve: Leading members of Maclure's faculty are described.

Chapter Thirteen: This chapter analyzes the divisive factors at work in the community.

Chapter Fourteen: Points of divergence between Maclure and Robert Owen are noted. Maclure's emerging opposition to all forms of subsidization to adults is analyzed.

Chapter Fifteen: The effect of separatism on the educational phase of the New Harmony experiment is examined.

Chapter Sixteen: Robert Owen's attempt to promote his version of "community education" as a substitute for Maclure's educational program is described.

Chapter Seventeen: Maclure's relations with Robert Owen become increasingly strained, primarily because of the latter's interference in the community's educational program.

Chapter Eighteen: Open conflict develops between Maclure and Robert Owen, and is climaxed by the former having a warrant issued for the latter man's arrest.

Chapter Nineteen: The dissolution of the partnership between Maclure and Robert Owen is described.

Chapter Twenty: Maclure's involvement in the aftermath of the New Harmony communitarian experiment is narrated.

Chapter Twenty-One: Various attempts to elicit Maclure's financial assistance are examined. The details of his relations with the Workingmen's Institute are noted.

Chapter Twenty-Two: Maclure's legacies, both material and philosophical are discussed. His more vital and provocative ideas are summarized, and conclusions are drawn concerning their validity.

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PREFACE

Examinations of significant American institutions and individuals, while almost depressingly plentiful in number, wide-ranging in scope, and thorough in treatment, have on the related subjects of education and educators been cursory at best. Within this sorely slighted sphere, few individuals have suffered more undeserved neglect than William Maclure.

Actually, the term "neglect" is hardly the proper one to apply to the general public's lack of acquaintance with the name of William Maclure--for to it his name means nothing at all. Panoramic treatments of the period during which Maclure was most active (1805-1830) reveal not a single mention of his name. Even more incomprehensible is his failure to fare much better at the hands of educational historians, who to the very limited extent that they have deigned to notice him, have labeled him the original sponsor of Pestalozzianism in America. His claim to this asterisk in American educational history is indisputable, but he deserves more attention in his own right. Aside from his Promethean efforts to see to the dissemination of Pestalozzian methodology, he had a highly distinguished scientific career, and his philanthropic social experimentation was as fascinating as it was expensive. Then, too, his extensive

writings on educational and political themes have stood the test of time amazingly well; almost all are thought-provoking, and many are extremely prescient, and uniquely pertinent.

In some ways, as Maclure noted about himself, he was surely "what some would call an original," with "too much obstinacy and independence to copy others."¹ On the other hand, his ideological banner was very much that of enlightened rationalism shot through with utilitarianism--a not uncommon mode of thought in his day. Most important, he offers that rare example of the thoroughgoing social reconstructionist--the root and branch type--who had enough courage of his convictions to attempt several times to actually put theories into practice. It is this lived quality of his educational and social ideas that sets him off from the vast majority of visionary reformers.

In poking about the cold ashes of inattention that encrust Maclure, speculation as to reasons for it is a fascinating if academic exercise. His mysterious lack of a discoverable youth, his incessant wanderlust, his atrocious handwriting and absolutely unique spelling tend to dismay the would-be biographer. And although his writings are often introspective and occasionally reminiscent, he gives few clues to sources which influenced his opinions. His

¹J. Percy Moore, "William Maclure--Scientist and Humanitarian," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, LXXXI, No. 3 (1947), 235.

thoroughgoing deism, which made him quite capable of assuming a most militant stance against organized religion; his advocacy of an economic leveling as the only sound basis of a just civilization; his disdain for the family as an institution; his aching urge to see the mighty humbled: these qualities repel the conservative. On the other hand, embarrassing to the liberal are: his waspish inability to suffer fools gladly; his complete espousal of a pragmatic utilitarianism, which led him to adopt an intensely anti-intellectual position toward classical studies and the fine arts; and his role as patron rather than innovator of educational reforms. All in all, a hard man to pigeon-hole--but, aside from the very real stature and significance of his life, it is the paradoxical nature of his character that makes him a delight to attempt to know. Refreshingly gruff and shrewdly cynical, he was at the same time capable of committing his energy and resources to projects that hinged on the most idealistic conceptions of human behavior.

Maclure may well have seen himself as an inheritor of the mantle of Benjamin Franklin. An examination of the careers and accomplishments of the two men yields such numerous parallels that it is easy to suspect that Maclure, though nowhere does he so indicate in his writings, may have seen in Franklin a model of sorts. He does comment favorably on Franklin as a political theorist, and on the

Franklin Institute, and he writes effusively of his admiration for the Quakers.²

Neither Maclure nor Franklin were born in Philadelphia, but both eventually made their homes there. However, both were truly citizens of the Atlantic community, frequently commuting between Europe and America, and spending long stretches of time on each continent. They shared a belief in European decadence, and held fond hopes that America would prove a seed-bed for the eventual regeneration of the old world. Each had risen through the world of business to an affluence that permitted him by middle age to turn his back on that world, something Maclure did with much more vehemence and finality than did Franklin. Each loved nothing better than intellectually intoxicating contact with friends of real accomplishment, of whom each had many. To this end Franklin had been instrumental in founding the American Philosophical Society; Maclure was at least of equal influence in the affairs of the Academy of Natural Science. (Each organization was located in Philadelphia, and each is still active today.)

Both Franklin and Maclure interested themselves in educational reform and in science; and, by virtue of his appointment as a claims commissioner in France, Maclure

²William Maclure, Opinions on Various Subjects, (3 vols.; New Harmony, Indiana: Printed at the school press, 1831-1838), I, 84, 128, 147-48.

may even be said to have entered, however slightly in comparison with Franklin, the world of diplomacy. Although Franklin did not share Maclure's complete rejection of classical learning, he, too, was active in espousing the cause of utilitarian education. Neither man was a mere dilettante in the sphere of science. Franklin's contributions are legend; and Maclure is freely acknowledged as the "Father of American Geology," with his contributions labeled highly significant and years ahead of their time. In terms of patronage of scientific and educational projects, Maclure has a very decided edge over Franklin. In each of these two spheres Maclure's commitments were so deep that his roles as patron and contributor intertwined.

The paucity of information concerning Maclure's early life is more than made up for by the wide spectrum of significant activities and personalities that crowded into his "retired" existence. Most of the issues to which he gave considerable attention--how to make education for the masses meaningful; how to make universal suffrage work; how to end poverty; whether or not the Industrial Revolution has made the family unit an anachronism; how to achieve world peace; whether or not there is merit in war and in martial training; the possible extinction of cities--are very much alive today. His opinions on these subjects, while in some instances illustrative of a touchingly naive optimism that serves to emphasize the time lag involved,

were by far in the greater percentage of cases both perceptive and provocative--and well worth a hearing today.

Very little material of a biographical nature has been written about William Maclure. In 1841, Samuel G. Morton was commissioned by the Academy of Natural Sciences, of which Maclure had been president for the twenty-three year period preceding his death, to write a memorial tribute to its late president. Morton's book, a slim volume titled A Memoir of William Maclure, Esq., published in 1841, is the only full scale treatment of Maclure ever published. Predictably eulogistic in tone, it enumerates Maclure's accomplishments, but does not delve deeply into his philosophical outlook, nor does it examine in detail his relationships with leading educational and social reformers of his close acquaintance. Much briefer but more penetrating in its insights as to what motivated Maclure is J. Percy Moore's "William Maclure--Scientist and Humanitarian," an article that appeared in the Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society publication of August, 1947. These two works constitute the entire body of published literature devoted exclusively to Maclure as a subject.

This is not to say that numerous other secondary works have failed to notice Maclure, but these treatments have all been within a much larger framework. By far the

most cogent and measured analysis is that of Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., who examines Maclure's thought and his complicated relations with Robert Owen in considerable detail in Backwoods Utopias (1950). Professor Bestor is eminently qualified to render such an analysis, for he has also edited the voluminous correspondence between William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot during the years 1820-1833. This correspondence, published under the title: "Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," is invaluable for the insights it contains, not only into Maclure's developing thought on several key matters, but of community affairs in New Harmony both during and after the communal period.

George Lockwood's The New Harmony Movement, published in 1905, deals with Maclure in fairly extensive fashion, but mainly, of course, from the standpoint of the role he played in the New Harmony experiment. William E. Wilson's much more recent The Angel and the Serpent (1964) also studies Maclure in some detail, but again within the larger context of the social experiment. Both works also share a tendency, though it is more pronounced in Wilson than in Lockwood, to compare Maclure to Robert Owen in a very favorable way, despite the relative renown of the two men.

Another author worth mentioning is Caroline Dale Snedeker. She has written several books using New Harmony

as a setting, and in two of them Maclure receives considerable attention. The Town of the Fearless (1931) is a straightforward and unexceptional account of the attempt by Maclure and Robert Owen to develop a utopian model village for the world to imitate. Seth Way (1917) is a fictional biography of Thomas Say, Maclure's close friend. In the latter work, a thinly-disguised Maclure plays a major role. Mrs. Snedeker's books have an especial interest because, though her sources are not documented, she is a direct descendant of Joseph Neef, who was one of the leading participants in the experiment, and a long-time associate of Maclure.

The major sources of information concerning Maclure's thought lie in his three volume work Opinions on Various Subjects, and in his considerable correspondence. The major portion of his correspondence was with Madame Fretageot, but many pertinent unpublished letters to and from him are available for examination at the Workingmen's Institute in New Harmony, Indiana. Many of these same letters have been put on microfilm at Professor Bestor's behest, and are available at the Illinois State Historical Archives of the University of Illinois Library in Champaign, Illinois.

Opinions on Various Subjects is a compilation of editorials written by Maclure on topics ranging from his views on politics through dietary tips and other hints

deemed by him to have practical value. Educational and political reforms are his major topics in these articles, and what he has to say is, while sometimes repetitive, often provocative and pertinent. The work had a somewhat confusing printing history,³ but it offers solid evidence of accomplishment on the part of the pupils of his School of Industry at New Harmony: for it was printed in its entirety on the school press.

The editorials contained in Opinions on Various Subjects initially appeared in two newspapers that were published in New Harmony. The New Harmony Gazette was a weekly publication. It was commenced on October 1, 1825, and enjoyed a life span of over three years, during which time Maclure was a frequent contributor. One of his lengthier essays, "On Education," appeared in weekly installments from June 20, 1827 through December 5, 1827. His educational prospectus was also published by the Gazette, as were several of his relatively infrequent letters to the editorial staff concerning community affairs. The other

³Volume I, with a title page dated 1831, contained 480 pages, but was not originally published separately. Instead, Volume II was added, the additional pages being numbered continually from the first volume. When page 592 was completed, a few copies were published, bound as one. The printing continued, however, until page 640, at which point more copies were issued, the two volumes again being bound as one. Then, in 1837, both Volume I and Volume II were entirely reprinted in separate form, with Volume II having independently numbered pages. Finally, in 1838, Volume III was issued.

newspaper that published many of Maclure's editorials was the Disseminator of Useful Knowledge, a publication sponsored by Maclure himself, and edited by Thomas Say, whom Maclure appointed to that post. The Disseminator began publication on January 16, 1828. It was initially published twice a month, but later became a weekly. It, too, had a life span slightly in excess of three years, its last issue being dated June 25, 1831. Neither paper was conceived of as primarily a purveyor of community news. The Gazette did print from time to time editorials on community affairs, and letters to the editors, as well as reports of community meetings. Thus it is a vital source of information concerning the actual operation of the communal experiment. The Disseminator deigned not to comment on community affairs, and therefore is much less important in this study. Taking as its subtitle: Containing Hints to the Youth of the United States--From the School of Industry, it was an earnest attempt to disseminate practical knowledge to the working class.

Maclure's geological notes, as well as his Observations on Geology in the United States, published in 1809, and recognized as the first important book on that subject written in the United States, are available in the New Harmony Workingmen's Institute. Several of the editorials collected in his Opinions also deal with the subject of

geology.

Another pertinent source of information on Maclure's ideas is George P. Fisher's two volume Life of Benjamin Silliman (1866). Benjamin Silliman was a professor of natural sciences at Yale University, and he and Maclure became close friends through their mutual interest in geology. Their correspondence, however, did not deal solely with this topic. Maclure found in Professor Silliman an intelligent sounding board for his theories on educational reform. Several of Maclure's letters to him on this topic are contained in Fisher's biography, as is a measured appraisal of Maclure written by Professor Silliman.

As for material dealing with various related and specific topics, Carl L. Becker's The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (1932) is an excellent examination of the major tenets of what Becker terms the "religion of the Enlightenment," a "religion" believed in by Maclure. J. B. Bury's The Idea of Progress (1932), Richard Hofstadter's Anti-Intellectualism in American Life (1963), and Marvin Meyers' The Jacksonian Persuasion (1960) are also of interest for the light they shed on intellectual currents that may well have influenced Maclure.

For background material concerning typical schools of Maclure's day, John William Adamson's English Education

1789-1902 (1930), Charles Birchenough's History of Elementary Education in England and Wales (1938), F. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin, A History of Education in American Culture (1953), and Julia Levering's Historic Indiana (1909) were most helpful. David Salmon's Joseph Lancaster (1904) contains detailed information on monitorial methodology.

The ideas and work of Johann Pestalozzi, whose methodology so impressed Maclure, is thoroughly and competently examined in Kate Silber's Pestalozzi (1960), and Gerald L. Gutek's Pestalozzi and Education (1968).

Joseph Neef is another much neglected figure in educational history. Aside from a few brief articles, the most recent and perceptive of which is Gerald L. Gutek's "An Examination of Joseph Neef's Theory of Ethical Education" (1969), Neef has received scant attention indeed. The best source of information concerning him is surely his own Sketch of a Plan of a Method of Education, which was published in 1808, and was the first pedagogical work ever printed in the United States.

Biographies of Robert Owen are numerous and vary widely in quality. Two of the best are Frank Podmore's two volume work, Robert Owen (1924), and Margaret Cole's Robert Owen of New Lanark (1953). John R. C. Harrison's Quest for the New Moral World (1969) is a recent and provocative work, in which the millennialistic aspect of Owen's

thought is thoroughly examined. Of course, Owen's own writings, especially his autobiography, entitled The Life of Robert Owen, and his A New View of Society (1817), contain much that is important to an understanding of his thinking and his activities.

Karl J. Arndt's George Rapp's Harmony Society (1964) supercedes earlier studies of the Rappites. To try to get a balanced picture of community affairs it is necessary to read from a variety of primary sources, among them: Paul Brown's Twelve Months in New Harmony (1827); F. A. Ismar's The School of Industry at New Harmony, State of Indiana, and Madame Maria Duclos Fretageot; a Letter to Mr. William Maclure (1830); Robert Dale Owen's Threading My Way (1874); Karl Bernhard's "Travels Through North America, During the Years 1825 and 1826;" Victor Colin Duclos' "Diary and Recollections of Victor Colin Duclos;" William Owen's "Diary of William Owen from November 10, 1824 to April 20, 1825," edited by Joel W. Hiatt; "New Harmony--an Adventure in Happiness: Papers of Thomas and Sarah Pears," edited by Thomas Clinton Pears, Jr.; William Pelham's "Letters of William Pelham, Written in 1825 and 1826;" "The Diaries of Donald Macdonald," edited by Caroline Dale Snedeker; and, of course, the work mentioned earlier, Arthur E. Bestor, Jr.'s "Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," as

well as numerous unpublished letters available in the New Harmony Workingmen's Institute.

Maclure's involvement with the Workingmen's Institute is thoroughly examined in Thomas James de la Hunt's History of the New Harmony Workingmen's Institute (1927). Maclure's will and the subsequent disposal of his bequests is discussed in: Julia Levering's Historic Indiana (1909); J. P. Dunn's The Libraries of Indiana (1893); and "Growth of Libraries in Indiana State Since 1807," a newspaper article also written by Dunn.

A problem arose in connection with the use of some of the primary material in this study. Unlike Maclure's published writings, neither his own letters nor those of the people with whom he corresponded have had spelling and grammatical errors weeded out. Rather than lose the flavor of authenticity, it has been decided to follow the lead provided by Professor Bestor in his editing of the Maclure-Fretageot correspondence: that is to keep the original spellings, and not to make use of the symbol [sic], which otherwise would appear with annoying frequency. However, in some instances, it has been deemed necessary for clarity's sake to supply in brackets missing letters, and occasionally even whole words.

I

The Educational Climate

William Maclure enters recorded history much in the manner Athena sprung from Zeus' brow. Nowhere in his own extensive writings does he mention his youth and early manhood. Nor have those who have examined his career with more than casual interest unearthed even so much as a record of his birth.¹ The sole source of information concerning his life prior to his second voyage to the United States, at which time he was already in his thirties, is a letter written by his brother, Alexander, in answer to a biographer's plea for information. Alexander, sharing his brother's individualistic disregard for the niceties of grammar, tells us that "William Maclure was born in 1763 in the Town of Ayr in Scotland his father was Merchant there."²

William received his early education from a young clergyman who tutored him. Later he attended a public school in Ayr; the schoolmaster there was a man named Douglas, who was reputed to be well versed in mathematics

¹ Caroline Dale Snedeker, The Town of the Fearless, (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1951), p. 94.

² Letter from Alexander Maclure to Samuel G. Morton (in the Samuel G. Morton Papers. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia).

and science. Whatever success these two may have had with Maclure's education lay in developing his interest in what he termed "natural, real knowledge, well authenticated practical facts, not knowledge fabricated in cabinets."³ For he grew to detest all classical education, deeming it useless--an attitude that was to underlie his every effort at educational reform. At the height of his interest and involvement in education he wrote bitterly about "the absurdity of my own classical education, launched into the world ignorant as a pig of anything useful, not having occasion to practice anything I had learned;"⁴ and he maintained, if somewhat facetiously, that his "native indolence . . . was rather augmented than diminished by . . . classical education."⁵

From the strength of his denunciations of the wastefulness and vacuity of classical studies, one might suspect that Maclure had been somewhat handicapped in his efforts to make his way in the material world. Such was

³Snedeker, p. 92.

⁴George P. Fisher, Life of Benjamin Silliman (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1866), I, 284-85. The quotation is from one of William Maclure's letters to Benjamin Silliman, professor of biological sciences at Yale, several of which are reprinted in George P. Fisher's biography.

⁵"Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 342.

hardly the case. Although his business career remains as deep a mystery as does his youth, his brother writes that in 1782, when nineteen years of age, William paid a brief visit to the city of New York; and "upon his return to London he became a Partner in a respectable American House of Miller Hart and Co."⁶ Whatever the nature of his work for the firm it apparently demanded considerable journeying about. During the next fifteen years he found himself in Ireland, France, and finally, in 1796, back in the United States, where he remained until 1803, becoming an American citizen during this interval. Somewhere along the way he succeeded in amassing a fortune sufficient not only to retire before he was forty, but from then on to indulge himself in hobbies and philanthropic efforts that intrigued him, doing, he took pride in noting, "as little as possible beyond what pleases myself."⁷

Apparently what pleased William most was active involvement in the promulgation of "reforms the most beneficial to humanity."⁸ Among these he gave highest priority to the reformation of traditional educational practices and to the advancement of the then infant science of geology.

⁶ A. Maclure to S. Morton, loc. cit.

⁷ J. Percy Moore, "William Maclure--Scientist and Humanitarian," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, LXXXI, No. 3 (1947), 235.

⁸ Fisher, II, 41-42.

The antipathy he felt in childhood toward conventional educational methods and subject matter had been reenforced during his years of extensive traveling, with the result that the itch to set things right became intense. And his delight in the practical and the observable, coupled with a lively curiosity undoubtedly helped foster his love of the study of geology. In a passage redolent with the utilitarianism in which he was so thoroughly steeped, he set down his reasons why, when once freed of the demand of earning a living, he had turned to these two fields:

It is an axiom with me that it is the positive and real interest of every individual in society to have as many friends and as few enemies as possible. To obtain them he must do as much good and as little harm as possible. I have long been in the habit of considering education one of the greatest abuses our species were guilty of, and of course one of the reforms most beneficial to humanity, and likewise offering to ambition a fair field. Almost no improvement has been made in it for two or three hundred years. The task appeared easy, and the credit to be acquired considerable.

I have adopted rock-hunting as an amusement in place of deer or partridge hunting, considering mineralogy and geology as the sciences most applicable to useful, practical purposes, but, like most of the things of the greatest utility, neglected.

The habit of traveling was one Maclure chose not to discard when he retired from business life. In 1803 he returned to Britain, and while there he accepted an appointment as a claims commissioner from James Monroe, who was then Minister at the Court of St. James. Maclure's assignment was

to settle American citizens' claims on France due to the revolution.

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the visiting of experimental schools had become quite the vogue among the affluent. Maclure observed that "schools for the lower orders are the rage of the day;" and he condescendingly described the "elegantly dressed visitors," who went about "caressing and encouraging the poor children congregated in hundreds."¹⁰ Yet if his description is accurate, it is because he, too, was caught up in the fad. And in fairness to these self-appointed investigators, it should be noted that a motive far more powerful than mere curiosity or reaction against traditional educational methods prompted most of them in their restless probing of educational institutions. More clearly than the vast majority of their contemporaries they realized that the monumental forces unleashed by the Industrial Revolution's initial impact had to be taken into account. While not always sharing anything like a common view of humanity, they were generally agreed that the industrial age was a reality, that it could not be wished away, and that perhaps a method could be found of educating the masses to come to terms with it more effectively.

A sharp spur for some reformers lay in the dim spectre

¹⁰Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 309.

they saw of an eventual revolt of the masses. In Maclure's case, this fear of mass revolt was not a vital consideration. It was not that he thought such a thing impossible. It was rather that he had been an "eye witness . . . from curiosity" to most of the revolutions that took place in Europe during his lifetime; and he believed that in most instances the common people were a bit better off afterward.¹¹ But for him, as well as those less sanguine, education was at the very least to help smooth the transition into the mechanistic age; it was the only possible key to building a rational world.

While in France, Maclure took the opportunity to combine his work as claims commissioner with a typical educational grand tour. He traveled widely, intersticing observations of a variety of schools with journeys devoted to the collection of specimens of natural history. It was during this period of his life that he became acquainted with prominent naturalists, several of whom he was later to persuade to immigrate to the United States, and eventually to join him and Robert Owen in their audacious experiment at New Harmony.

Too widely traveled and too cynical to be a complete

¹¹ William Maclure, Opinions on Various Subjects (3 vols.; New Harmony, Indiana: Printed at the school press, 1831-1838, I, 200-20; II, 539, 568-69, 603, 605, 629, 636.

chauvinist, Maclure's journeying nevertheless solidified his opinion that in the United States lay the best hope for a society based on fairness to the common man. In a letter to a friend he clearly expressed the intensity of his feelings:

The plots and conspiracies of the great and privileged orders against the peace, comfort and happiness of the industrious productive classes have succeeded in Europe. I am mortified beyond measure . . . and am forced for consolation to extend my views across the Atlantic, that I may be an eye witness to the prosperity of the United States, and enjoy the gratifying sensation of beholding man in the most dignified attitude which he has yet attained.¹²

Although he was never to put down deep roots anywhere in the United States, Maclure took his citizenship in great earnest. An inveterate collector of books and paintings as well as natural phenomena, much of his pleasure in amassing these treasures lay in his feeling of being useful by adding to his adopted country's prosperity by supplying it with items of rarity and interest he acquired during his travels. And as he visited the schools, or at least one school in particular, he became seized with the idea of further serving America, and ultimately all mankind, by causing a new educational method that greatly impressed him to be transplanted across the Atlantic.

The school that provided for Maclure the educational equivalent of the revivalist's salvation was Pestalozzi's

¹²Moore, p. 235.

school at Yverdon. In the summer of 1805, Maclure happened on it, and his long-time associate in educational ventures, Joseph Neef, has recorded a description of its immediate impact upon Maclure:

To see Pestalozzi's method displayed before his eyes, and to form an unalterable wish of naturalizing it in his own country, were operations succeeding each other with such rapidity, that Maclure took them for one and the same operation.¹³

The force of the favorable impression the Pestalozzian method made on Maclure was undoubtedly intensified by his complete impatience and disgust with almost everything he saw being done in the name of education. His aversion, on the grounds of its complete impracticality, to the type of education he himself had undergone as a youth has already been noted. And, aside from prejudices formed as a result of his personal experiences, there was much to react against in typical schools of his time. Highly formalized methods were the rule, with the major aim being the digestion of knowledge culled from textbooks; all too often meaning and practical application were completely subordinated to simple memorizing. A class was usually attended by children ranging in age from four or five to thirteen or fourteen. The matter of discipline was a prime consideration, and ready resort to stern methods of punishment was quite in keeping with the

¹³ Joseph Neef, Sketch of a Plan and Method of Education (Philadelphia: Printed for the author, 1808), p. 5.

conception of the child as a sinful being; besides, it was usually the most familiar technique available to the untrained teacher.

Most instruction was on an individual basis. Because of the wide age diversity within each class, the teacher would usually deal with each of his students separately. A typical day involved the teacher calling children to him one after another, with each child reciting from text or memory, then being rewarded with a smile or a blow depending on the teacher's assessment of the recitation. Usually, while this shuttling process went on, the din in the room was constant; for the other pupils were encouraged to continually practice their recitations aloud. Aside from the added discomfort of being too cold in winter and suffocatingly hot in summer, the average schoolroom was hardly designed to stimulate interest, let alone curiosity. Seats were scarce and uncomfortable, desks were primitive. Materials other than textbooks and writing utensils were very rarely considered necessary or for that matter suitable in a classroom.

Attempts had been made to bring some order to the educational situation. One method of instruction which gained wide acceptance during the first decade of the nineteenth century was the monitorial, or Lancasterian, system. Two English clergymen, Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster, each independently claimed credit for the system's origin. There really was little enough to get

excited about, for neither man was in any real sense an educational theorist. That coteries could form about each of them, that leading figures in society could wax enthusiastic over their feeble and essentially similar panaceas, offers melancholy evidence of the sad state of education for the common people at the time.

For the monitorial system was little more than a method whereby one teacher taught a packaged lesson to a group of older, brighter students, and these students, called monitors, each in turn taught a group of younger children. Obviously, one master teacher could, by using a sufficient number of monitors, "educate a large number of pupils. Actually, the master was more overseer than teacher, his job being to organize, to reward, to punish, and to inspire. His role, according to Lancaster, was that of "silent by-stander and inspector."¹⁴ It was the monitor who was the essence of the system. When a child was admitted, he was assigned to his class by a monitor; a monitor taught him; when he was absent, one monitor recorded the fact, another found out the reason; a monitor examined him periodically, and when he showed progress, a monitor promoted him; a monitor ruled the writing paper; a monitor made or repaired the pens; a monitor had charge of the slates and the books;

¹⁴David Salmon, Joseph Lancaster (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1904), p. 7.

and a monitor-general supervised all the other monitors. The teaching was made as simple and mechanical as possible, with master lesson plans that had to be followed to the letter. Instruction was military in tone, rigid in form, and completely unimaginative. "Look at a regiment," said Bell, "you will see a beautiful example of the system which I have recommended for a . . . school. Every boy has his place and every hour its proper business. There grows up imperceptibly a sense of duty, subordination and obedience."¹⁵

Limited and inefficient though it was, the system did have its advantages, especially when seen against the lingering opposition to education of any kind for the poor. Its basic appeal was that it taught the elements of reading, writing and arithmetic more cheaply and efficiently than hitherto. Instead of the confusion and idleness that were hallmarks of schools of the day, short lessons and working to a schedule were insisted upon, and teaching was to always proceed from the simple to the complex. According to Lancaster, "Every pupil in school shall, at all times, have something to do, and a motive for doing it."¹⁶ Another thing that won support from many reformers was the shift in

¹⁵ Charles Birchenough, History of Elementary Education in England and Wales (London: Universal Tutorial Press, 1938), p. 239.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 242.

emphasis from the harsh discipline typical of the schools of the day to a system of rewards for good performance.

Emulation of model behavior was to be engendered by an elaborate system of place taking. Inexpensive prizes were given with a lavish hand. Lancaster admitted it was not unusual to award as many as two hundred prizes at the same time. Virtue was rewarded by little tickets, which were exchanged for money at a fixed rate, or by badges, which were exchanged for toys. The most deserving children were given the Order of Merit, a silver medal to be worn about one's neck.

While both Bell and Lancaster emphatically abjured the use of the rod, their means of fostering in a miscreant a sense of shame were of a nature to make it doubtful whether the victim would not sometimes prefer a simple beating. For profanity, solvenliness, or disobedience to parents, the offender was dressed in labels describing his crime and given a paper crown to wear. A truant was decked out with a card detailing his offense and tied to a post. For repeated idleness or talking, one had a wooden log put around one's neck. If this failed to have the desired effect, the legs of the offender were shackled together; then he was forced to hobble around the classroom until ready to promise to behave more circumspectly in the future. For variety, a recalcitrant pupil was occasionally put in a sack suspended to the roof of the school. Frequent offenders were occasion-

ally yoked together by a piece of wood fastened around their necks, then, thus confined, made to parade about the school walking backwards. Constant repeaters and incorrigibles were tied up in a blanket and left overnight on the school house floor.

A large part of the appeal of Bell and Lancaster lay in their belief that it was possible to mechanize education, to make it a product efficient yet cheap. Both men sincerely thought that they had discovered a systematic short cut to knowledge, and they convinced many others that they had. They were helped by the fact that, thanks to the impact of industrialization, concepts couched in mechanistic terms were very much in vogue. Lancaster spoke of his "invention" as "a new and mechanical system for the use of schools,"¹⁷ and he added, "Any boy who can read can teach . . . although he knows nothing about it. An automaton might be a schoolmaster."¹⁸

In spite of Maclure's designating the monitorial system "parrot education,"¹⁹ there were certain of its tenets with which he found himself in agreement. For one

¹⁷ John William Adamson, English Education 1789-1902 (Cambridge: University Press, 1930), p. 25.

¹⁸ Birchenough, p. 253.

¹⁹ Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 363.

thing, its relative cheapness made feasible the provision of rudimentary education on a national scale. Both Bell and Lancaster wanted to connect education with manual labor, a policy Maclure vigorously endorsed. Keeping lessons short and keeping children busy were two more monitorial dictums Maclure espoused. Proceeding from the simple to the complex was another. Maclure agreed with the monitorialists that teachers needed no special qualifications. Finally, he, too, found corporal punishment abhorrent. Thus it is easy to see why he was so little opposed to the monitorial system that he was not alarmed by the probability that it would be preferred by most localities for its cheapness; for he thought it could easily have necessary Pestalozzian refinements of methodology "gradually grafted" onto it.²⁰

On this latter point, it is hard to follow Maclure's line of reasoning. For, in spite of their various areas of agreement, there were fundamental points upon which the views of Maclure and Pestalozzi on one side and the monitorialists on the other were diametrically opposed. Certainly the rigidly inflexible curriculum, imposed from above in complete disregard of the child's interests, and the boastedly mechanistic approach approved by Bell and Lancaster were anti-

²⁰W. Maclure, I, pp. 47, 62, 64, 65, 66, 69, 77, 83, 85, 88, 362-63, 371; II, pp. 537, 542, 571, 608-09, 620, 624. See also: A. E. Dobbs, Education and Social Movements 1700-1850 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1919), p. 151.

thetical to the spirit of Pestalozzian education. Nor could Maclure, even though he was inclined to see children in somewhat less idealistic terms than did some of his associates in educational reform, have possibly found anything but repugnant some of the more elaborate punishments endorsed under the monitorial system. Thus, an acceptance, however hedging in tone, of the monitorial system from one so highly oriented to child-centered educational method as Maclure is a bit surprising. It illustrated the tendency of reformers of his time to gloss over, or fail to scrutinize very closely, areas of disagreement with those believed to be kindred spirits--probably because, despite the vogue that panaceas of various sorts enjoyed during the first half of the nineteenth century, the field of educational reform was essentially a lonely one.

II

Pestalozzian Disciple

Prior to Maclure's first contact with Pestalozzi, by which time both men were well along in years, it would be hard to find two individuals whose lives had followed more dissimilar patterns: Pestalozzi, provincial, a complete financial failure, the subject of ridicule by acquaintances; and Maclure, who had plunged into the economic jungle a callow youth only to emerge--in an enviably brief span of time--a rich cosmopolite. It is therefore more than a little ironic, yet surely indicative of something truly generous and serene in Maclure's makeup, that it was he, the worldly success, who came to unreservedly avow his and society's debt to Pestalozzi for pointing the way to what made for educational common sense.

When Maclure "stumbled upon" the Pestalozzian method, his reaction, as has been noted, was uncharacteristically ebullient. Even less predictable was his lifelong adherence to the system. Once embarked on the sea of educational reform, he experienced many staggering disappointments, but his faith in the Pestalozzian method never eroded in the slightest.

Superficial treatments have tended to lump both Pestalozzi and Maclure with the genial eccentrics. The reasons do not lie in their educational ideas and innovations--for many of these they often receive high marks. In Pestalozzi's case, it undoubtedly had to do with his inability to cope with the practical exigencies of supporting his family and his sorry record as an administrator. With Maclure, it was probably guilt by association--association with Robert Owen in the effort to produce a model utopian village at New Harmony, Indiana. For until he agreed to join forces with Owen--which he did only reluctantly and after considerable persuasion had been exercised on the part of friends--he was widely regarded as a man of probity and excellent sense in things intellectual as well as financial.

Of course, it would be very difficult to make any sort of a case for either Maclure or Pestalozzi as counterparts of modern day members of the establishment. Nor should either man be robbed of the unique aspects of his character. But to invest them with an aura of being somewhat out of touch with their contemporaries is to provide as distorted a picture as would be the attempt to paint either man as a seminal thinker. For they were both very much products of the highly significant forces at work around them. Pestalozzi was born in 1746 and died in 1827. Maclure's dates are 1763-1840. Thus both men's lives rather neatly spanned both the French and the Industrial Revolutions;

and they both found the source of their paradoxically optimistic discontent and their reformist zeal in the societal changes and the intellectual currents occasioned by these two momentous events.

Carl Becker's summary of the essential articles of faith shared by members of what he terms "the religion of the Enlightenment," finds both Pestalozzi and Maclure qualified for affiliation with that sect. Although, given his more volatile and less mystical nature, Maclure would probably have been more emphatic about it than Pestalozzi, both men would have been in substantial agreement with what Becker lists as the major tenets of Enlightenment thought:

(1) man is not natively depraved; (2) the end of life is life itself, the good life on earth instead of the beautiful life after death; (3) man is capable, guided solely by the light of reason and experience, of perfecting the good life on earth; and (4) the first and essential condition of the good life on earth is the freeing of men's minds from the bonds of ignorance and superstition, and their bodies from the arbitrary oppression of the constituted social authorities.¹

Enlightenment doctrine, being a mode of thought especially congenial to members of the rising middle class, was a potent carrier of the virus of social reform. Thus, Maclure and Pestalozzi were by no means unique in reacting with alarm and compassion to the unrest and inequities that

¹ Carl L. Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (New Haven: Yale University Press, c. 1932), pp. 102-03.

were by-products of the conditions of extreme flux occasioned by the revolutionary nature of the period. In the British Isles, Maclure was able to see at first hand some of the uglier effects of the Industrial Revolution; while on the continent, living amidst the effects of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, as well as the initial impact of industrialization, Pestalozzi was no stranger to the plight of the dispossessed and impoverished. Each of these cataclysmic events had its own especially cruel way of victimizing the very young: in England industrial employment practices systematically robbed many of their childhood; while on the war ravaged continent, homeless orphans were no rarity.

To believers, as Maclure and Pestalozzi were, in the Enlightenment view of the child as both innocent and civilization's best hope for the future, the irrational environmental conditions of the day were frustrating and tragic perversions. Unless drastic reforms were instituted, the idea of progress, which was inherent in both Enlightenment and Utilitarian thought, was obviously fated to remain a bitter mockery of what might have been.

With their avid faith in man's--or at least the uncorrupted child's--potential ability to deal rationally with his environment, Maclure and Pestalozzi tended to see industrialization as a challenge, not an absolute evil. Vitally concerned with reducing the working man's economic vulner-

ability by providing him with a useful trade, both men rejected the possibility of a Rousseauian Arcadia devoid of machinery. They had each observed enough of the growing pains of industrialization to be appalled by its dehumanizing propensities. But they also saw in mechanism latent capabilities for a new standard of comfort for the many. Pestalozzi wrote of industrial labor, "I never judge it right to put an end to this method of earning, but suggest that . . . in proportion to his increased earning a man needs more education than in his previous condition."² And Maclure was realist enough to know that right or not, industrialization was not about to fade away; the utilitarian in him told him that humanity must make the best of what was possible.

However, though willing to learn to live with the machine, neither man was happy about continuing to live with the sort of machinations they believed had resulted in the maldistribution of property--which they both felt was in turn at the very core of the problem of achieving a natural, sensible society. The initial tendency of industrialization quite obviously had been to accelerate and further magnify this unnatural trend. Somehow the new forces at work in the world had to be brought under control; and at the same time old habits, traditions, and assumptions that had made for

²Kate Silber, Pestalozzi (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, c. 1960), p. 263.

such gross inequalities among men had to be discarded. Maclure and Pestalozzi believed that the solution to both problems lay in education. It offered mankind's best hope of producing a new breed of men who would prove themselves capable of harnessing this new way of life to logical, useful ends. But quite obviously it could not be the sort of education that had helped create and continued to slavishly serve the corrupt, inequitable societal framework so repugnant to enlightened men everywhere.

It was by some French friends of Pestalozzi that Maclure's attention was first drawn to the educational innovations that were to so intrigue him. Pestalozzi's school at Yverdon was to be but another stop on Maclure's tour of experimental schools. But what he saw and heard there quickly convinced him that he had at last found the method which could bring about badly needed educational reforms.

Yverdon was accustomed to visitors and was open to anyone. Strangers were came to have a look were admitted to social functions, to lessons, and even to staff meetings. Thus Maclure had ample opportunity to study the institution closely. The school was actually a castle, a former stronghold of the Dukes of Savoy. The municipality had renovated it and placed it rent-free at Pestalozzi's disposal. It contained many large halls suitable for classrooms and dormitories, and it was furnished simply but adequately. A

large courtyard and a nearby meadow made excellent playgrounds.

The school's population numbered about 250. It was made up of children who boarded there and some day pupils from the town. Girls as well as boys attended, and all ages were represented. Although the majority of the pupils came from middle-class homes, a fair percentage of poor children were carried by the fee-paying pupils. The idea was that family circumstances, social background, and even intellectual distinction should make no difference in the way the children were treated; everyone was to be considered equal. All this, of course, found favor with Maclure's democratic nature.

Included among the basic concepts at Yverdon were: a natural way of life, with plenty of exercise, fresh air, and nourishing food; order and regularity; exertion without overstraining; and alternation between lessons and games and between one subject of learning and another. However, the children's tasks were firmly prescribed, for Pestalozzi (and Maclure echoed the sentiment) could not bear to see inactivity. The daily lessons--and there were ten of them--began at six in the morning, before the children had so much as made their toilet. But the lessons were varied and included such diversions as nature observation, woodwork, gymnastics, and various games. Wednesday and Sunday afternoons were set aside for long walks. In summer there was

frequent bathing, in winter skating and tobogganning; and often there were mock military maneuvers in the meadow.

Pestalozzi looked upon the child as a unity made up of separate faculties of moral, intellectual, and physical powers, or, more simply heart, head, and hands. He believed that education should consist in the natural, harmonious development of these faculties. The fundamental educational approach to be used was the encouragement of each child to develop his own powers. The pupils were not to be given the products of learning, but guided to learn to think for themselves. For Pestalozzi believed the task of education lay not in imposing on the child fixed doctrines and alien concepts, but rather in helping him to develop his own constructive powers and conquer his own corruptive tendencies. The main object of the child's education was to awaken in him the will to work, to encourage steadfastness and the desire for an independent and honorable adult life. Practical wisdom, not theoretical knowledge, was what every man needed, whatever his station in life. Yet education for a particular occupation, Pestalozzi insisted, "must always be subordinate to the universal aim of a general education."³

³ Ibid., pp. 34-35. See also: Gerald Lee Gutek, Pestalozzi and Education (New York: Random House, c. 1968), pp. 19, 30, 40, 57, 75-76, 87-88, 97, 130-31, 144, 146-47, 151.

The school curriculum was concerned not with the transmission of the products of learning but with the active process of search, not with dead-letter work but with sensory intuition, not with catechetical repetition but with rational thought. Pestalozzi refused all "artificial" means of teaching, insisting that teachers only use surrounding nature, daily happenings, and the children's spontaneous activity. He was opposed most of all to mere words; he preferred to let things speak for themselves and to let circumstances awaken the emotions and faculties of the children. Rather than external prodding and compulsion, the natural instincts of the child should provide his motivation to learn.

Lessons were, as closely as possible, related to objects and circumstances in the environment. Pestalozzi held with the sense realists that sense impression is the absolute foundation of all knowledge. In the education of children it was necessary to rely at the earliest stages upon observation of actual things and natural objects rather than upon books and reading. Therefore, Pestalozzi devised a whole series of "object lessons" in order to give full play to the child's natural desire to develop his senses of sight, touch, and sound. Plants, animals, special methods, tools, drawing, modeling, music, and geography were important items in his program for developing the perceptive faculties. Throughout, there was emphasis on

the child as an active being engaged in the process of experiencing. For unlike the earlier sense realists, Pestalozzi did not view the young mind as a passive receptor of sense impressions. Rather it was an active mind, perceiving, discriminating, analyzing, and selecting. Thus, the thing to be stressed was not the end result but the process of learning. For example, only after the arithmetical processes were thoroughly understood with the help of visual and tactile aids, did dots and finally figures come into use. Similarly, writing began with the drawing of rising and falling strokes and of open and closed curves.

Although morals were not taught, and authority was encouraged to base itself on love rather than on fear, self-restraint and quiet were demanded, and certain restrictions, necessitated by large numbers of pupils being in close quarters, were laid down. Pestalozzi conceived of the revolutionary approach of making the children keep quiet and of teaching them all together; questions were addressed to all of them and they were made to answer in rhythm. Yet, insisting that children should not be burdened and confused by anything beyond their complete comprehension, he refused to let them learn anything by heart which they did not understand. However, despite his interdictions to his teaching staff to use admonishment and deprivation rather than corporal punishment, he himself did not hesitate to box the ears of children when they deserved it.

To stimulate the child's activity Pestalozzi never appealed to ambition, but rather to the child's love of his parents or teachers, his sense of duty, and his interest in the subject. He did not believe in marks of distinction, orders and prizes such as were ordinarily offered in Lancasterian schools. Maclure, of course, endorsed this approach. To a rational utilitarian, logic indicated clearly that one served one's own true interests by serving all mankind. In cooperation, not competition, lay the best hope for humanity, and rationally educated children would understand all this.

Pestalozzi wanted the characteristics of a home to be emulated at Yverdon. He felt that "the spirit of the living room" was the basis of a good education, and that "parental love was the first demand on a good educator."⁴ But providing a homey atmosphere was far from the only demand he made of his staff. Although the teachers were encouraged to be independent and to experiment, Pestalozzi expected them to work as hard as he did. Not only did they teach from eight to ten periods a day, but they were also occupied with the children outside lessons. The unmarried teachers had their meals with the pupils, their beds in the dormitories, and did their work in the classrooms. The more experienced teachers had the additional task of supervising a particular

⁴Silber, p. 133.

group of children of various ages, each being a sort of house-father to a small family for whose personal well-being he was responsible. Preparation, correction of papers, and research were done at night when the children were asleep.

Such great expectations as Maclure came to have for the catalytic power of sensible educational reforms naturally demanded great enthusiasms. All things considered, he found Yverdon wonderfully refreshing; and Pestalozzi made a strongly favorable and permanent impression on him. In an essay on the "Advantages of the Pestalozzian System of Education," published more than a quarter of a century later, Maclure wrote of his conversion to Pestalozzian education:

Having travelled seven summers in Switzerland, and some months of each residing at Pestalozzi's school at Yverdon, I never saw the pupils in or out of school without one of the teachers presiding at their games, all of which were calculated to convey instruction. They were constantly occupied with something useful to themselves or to others, from five o'clock in the morning to eight o'clock at night, with the exception of four half hours at meals at which all the teachers ate with the pupils. Their attention was never fatigued with more than one hour at the same exercise, either moral or physical; all was bottomed on free-will, by the total exclusion of every species of correction. Their actions were cheerful, energetic and rapidly tending towards the end aimed at. I do not recall ever to have heard a cry or any demonstration of pain or displeasure, nor even an angry word from either teacher or pupil all the time that I lived amongst them. Though I often went out of my road fifty leagues to examine young men taught under this system, I do not even remember finding one of an ill-natured temper, or bad conduct, of all that I saw either in Europe or in this country, and I generally found them greatly superior, in all useful accomplishments, to those educated by other methods. It is on this practical proof of the great superiority of the system that my confidence

in its immense utility to mankind has been founded, as I do not pretend to be a judge of scholastic exercises without seeing the result.

One of the most beneficial consequences is the pleasure all Pestalozzi's pupils take in mental labor and study. Agreeable sensations being connected with intellectual employment from the earliest dawn of reason, it continues to be an ornament throughout life; and all my experience forces me firmly to believe that education may, with great ease and pleasure, be so conducted as to render, by early habits, all the useful and necessary operations of both males and females, a pastime and amusement. . . .⁵

Obviously, despite their own quite dissimilar personal experiences, the international flavor of Enlightenment thought, combined with each man's acute awareness of revolutionary changes afoot, made for similarities between Maclure and Pestalozzi in their delineation of the larger problems confronting mankind. That they came to see educational reform, both of goals and methodology, as the alchemists' stone by which the just and natural society could be produced made it likely that the two men would see in each other much to admire. But there were fundamental differences in viewpoint which Maclure's relief at finding a rational being in the educational desert encouraged him to ignore. In this instance no real harm was done, for circumstances never forced Maclure to repudiate or even examine closely his claim to be a Pestalozzian disciple. However, in the examination which follows of the points of divergence

⁵William Maclure, Opinions on Various Subjects (3 vols.; New Harmony, Indiana: Printed at the school press, 1831-1838), I, 61.

between the two men, it becomes apparent that, had Pestalozzi agreed to join forces with Maclure, as the latter tried to persuade him to do, the result might well have been anything but harmonious.

Maclure had opinions and theories about almost everything, which he stated dogmatically and often in highly original language. Not sharing the romantic strain in Pestalozzi's makeup, he mistrusted the imagination and said of it, "Our species is the only one that dreams when awake." Unlike Pestalozzi, he had a peppery temper and no excessive amount of tolerance of human feelings. Where Pestalozzi was noted for his fondness for children, Maclure was more cynical, and perhaps more objective. He argued against the old system of imprisoning children in school five or six hours a day "to a task of irksome and disgusting study," not because of any tender feelings for the little moppets but because, he said, they afterwards were "let loose on society for eight hours, full of thoughts of revenge and retaliation against their jailers."⁶

There was much in Pestalozzi's thought that was essentially conservative. He did insist that specialized education based on class or vocational differentiation should in all cases be subordinated to general education. But he was positively medieval in his insistence that if

⁶Ibid., I, 58.

one were to attempt to rise above one's station in life, the powers within him would "torment him with intense agony;" he could then only become further confused and lost, lonely and not "well ordered." Such a life, Pestalozzi insisted, would not possibly be blessed with "inner peace." More important, that domestic stability so vital to proper educational environment would be drastically upset whenever children were "tempted to reach for a bread plate that lies higher than that of their father."⁷

Maclure was far too much a democrat to feel anything but disgust with such ideas. In fact, he attributed most of man's misfortunes to the division of society into classes. He believed that there were only two basic classes--producers and non-producers. Among the members of the latter class Maclure included not only those who ruled due to inherited titles or wealth, or were monopolists or speculators, but also priests, members of the military, merchants, lawyers, and physicians. As far as he was concerned, these non-productive parasites were worse than merely useless. They were mankind's curse, constantly out to undermine what he deemed the foundations of progress--free education for the masses, universal suffrage, and the more equal division of property. One way or another the non-producers had to be shorn of power.

⁷ Silber, no. 36, 50.

Thus, much of Maclure's interest in educational reform was due to his desire to eliminate class divisions, or it might be said, an entire class. He was convinced that by educating the masses, from infant schools right on up through agencies for the education of working adults, more could be accomplished than by any revolutionary attempt to reshape society in a single political action. But should the non-producers continue as they had through the ages to wilfully impede all progress, then they would richly deserve to be forcibly extinguished as a class by the long suffering producers, should they be finally goaded into revolt by the selfish obstinacy of their oppressors.

Pestalozzi was capable of declaiming, in a wildly romantic metaphor, that so far had mankind strayed from Nature's true path that "the poor man is thrust away from her bosom, and the rich destroy themselves by rioting and by lounging on her overflowing breast."⁸ Yet he could never have condoned either Maclure's justification of revolt by the masses or his disdain for the sanctity of property. He did agree with Maclure that the State should accept as its rightful burden the education of the working classes--but his defense of this point of view involved the concession

⁸Johann H. Pestalozzi, "The Method," Allgemeine Monatschrift für Erziehung und Unterricht, edited by J. P. Rossel. (Aix-la-Chapelle: Niederer, 1828), IX, 66.

of the inviolate nature of property rights. Pestalozzi's argument ran thusly: the only way the overwhelming majority of men have of sustaining and improving their living standards is through the use of their physical and intellectual capacities; but if these powers have not been satisfactorily educated, mankind has been denied what amounts to his birth-right--the counterpart of the rich man's right to the security of his property. It would not suffice, Pestalozzi insisted, for a society to leave everything to nature or to be blind to the social disadvantages of poverty. Since they have not the power to help themselves, the deprived masses must be assisted by being educated. For Pestalozzi, the recognition of this claim of the masses to a general education was a public duty; and it together with the sanctity of property would therefore constitute the basis of civilization. He saw no other hope left for saving mankind but through educating its people to one humanity--the only remedy against a corrupt world being the education of every individual in every nation.

Maclure was ready to go much further. As far as he was concerned, not only were free education and universal suffrage fundamental rights due the productive element of society--all property and its distribution rightfully belonged in the hands of the producers. The inequities that wealth created were the cause of most of mankind's troubles. He insisted that "an almost equal division of property, knowledge, and power" constituted "the only firm foundation of

freedom;" for, he reasoned, "the equal division of property gives vigor to the great mass, and facilitates the acquiring of knowledge, which must be the foundation of all power."⁹

Actually Maclure was not really much more disdainful of property rights than was Pestalozzi. In spite of his impatience with those who were non-productive, he did not propose to wrest material wealth from the hands of the mighty by force. When he wrote of the eventual equalization of property, he was merely being true to that aspect of utilitarian doctrine which held that the passage of democratic legislation such as universal suffrage, the abolishment of hereditary privilege including primogeniture and entail, and a system of direct taxation would, in a reasonably short span of time, virtually eliminate wide disparities of wealth. He believed in a "strong propensity of nature to equalize property, and, consequently, knowledge and power, when not counteracted by unjust laws."¹⁰ He was convinced that in a situation of complete laissez faire, the spendthrift habits of those who inherit rather than earn their property would assure that wealth would almost never descend into the third generation. He did think--and his New Harmony venture did not change his mind--that eventually people would

⁹W. Maclure, I, 1, 4, 19, 25, 52, 122, 220; II, 510, 571, 604, 615, 617-18.

¹⁰W. Maclure, I, 25, 37, 86, 149; II, 543, 571, 592, 615.

come to discover the essential wisdom in holding property in common, living in small communitarian villages, emphasizing cooperation rather than competition. (He was, in fact, so firmly convinced of the eventual demise of large cities that he rejected all opportunities to investment in Philadelphia real estate; and he wrote of a time in the future when wolves would be the cities' only denizens, staring into empty rooms through broken window panes.) But he counted upon education, not revolution, to affect the necessary changes.

While Maclure found insufferable the sort of social rigidity Pestalozzi deemed proper, he did strongly believe that individuals should be educated in terms of a realistic assessment of their future prospects. Pestalozzi undoubtedly struck a responsive chord in him when he tempered his insistence upon an economic caste system by urging that man be trained not only in those skills which would be most essential to him in his particular station, but also in such a way that in exercising them all his faculties would be brought into balanced play. Thus each person had to be educated to be more than a mere economic cipher; he needed to be educated to be a satisfactory husband, father, and citizen, capable of self-reliance and even able to help others. Only the education of the total individual could effectively avert the dangers which threatened industry in particular and civilization in general.

Another conservative facet of Pestalozzi's thought

was his endorsement of the concept of stewardship. He urged the upper classes to accept as a sacred duty the education of the lower classes for fitness to exist in the industrial world, and to be capable of meeting the responsibilities of a higher standard of living. Ironically, while Maclure exemplified this ideal by his own actions, he had none of Pestalozzi's faith in the paternalistic philanthropy of the well-to-do. On the contrary, Maclure accused the more fortunate members of society of deliberately keeping the working classes in shackles of ignorance and poverty. He insisted that "none but the millions can benefit the millions;" and he asserted that "until the many shall be educated, they must labor for the few." Schools, Maclure believed, could be wonderful tools to implement social reform, but to be effective, they had to be consciously directed toward that end. He warned that schools were being used instead to perpetuate social injustice, with most of what public educational funds there were being spent "to teach the children of the idle and non-productive," thereby increasing "the inequality of knowledge" which had been "already pushed to a pitch dangerous to freedom."¹¹ Thus, while he heartily agreed with Pestalozzi that schools should not set out to teach a multitude of unneeded skills, he could hardly have failed to take umbrage at the latter's dictum that

¹¹ Ibid., I, 68; II, 561.

elementary education of the masses ought by no means to encourage fantastic dreams of abolishing class distinctions.

Both Pestalozzi and Maclure wanted education to begin at the earliest possible age, but for different reasons. Pestalozzi declared the most important period in a child's development to be that from birth to the end of his first year. Furthermore, he recognized the necessity of establishing a close link between education in the home and education at school. He emphasized the immense importance of the mother in the child's early upbringing. He was even anxious that the children's parents take an active part in the life of the school, so much so that he gratefully accepted their suggestions and criticisms. He realized that what he termed "a natural education" starts in the family. As far as he was concerned, no school, no teacher however good, could do for the child what was essentially the task of good parents. He contended that where institutions are unavoidable they must be imbued with a family spirit so that the child may not lack love. For, he argued, it is not institutions but individuals that have an educative influence, and this influence should be directed not on an impersonal group but on each individual child.

Maclure, on the other hand, was just as anxious to have children put into schools at once--but mainly because he wanted to eliminate as much as possible the pernicious influence of their parents. He agreed with Pestalozzi that

parents ideally should be the natural teachers of their children. But Maclure contended that the vast majority of them disqualified themselves from this vital role. They were too indolent and neglectful, and too much the product of their own unnatural education. He urged that all infants be placed in boarding schools. There they would be "removed from the constant temptation to excess given . . . by the foolish fondness of their mothers." And only in such institutions would the children's morals be "secure from that contamination unavoidable in mixed societies, where the vices of the old are perpetrated to the young."¹²

Maclure was even less inclined than Pestalozzi to worry about the fine arts. Of literature he once wrote, "The flowers of rhetoric only serve to disguise the truth."¹³ He declared that education, like mankind, may be divided into two species, the productive and non-productive, the useful and the ornamental, the necessary and the amusing. He listed as non-productive and ornamental subjects all those which gave free play to the imagination, such as literature, mythology, history, etc.. He insisted:

It is the productive, useful, and necessary that constitute the comfort and happiness of the millions,

¹²Ibid., I, 48.

¹³William Wilson, The Angel and the Serpent (Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1964), pp. 184-85.

. . . and all appropriations out of the public treasury, for teaching . . . non-productive knowledge which is merely ornamental or amusing to the professor, may perhaps be considered as a deviation from right and justice. . . .¹⁴

Pestalozzi insisted that "the poor must be educated for poverty," and added that "ordinary people, women who are seen surrounded by laughing, high-spirited children, and men who do their business simply and quietly, go to church regularly, and live in peace with their neighbors" would make the best teachers of the masses.¹⁵ Maclure, though never explicitly condemning the theory, by his own recruiting efforts proved that his notion of promising teacher material was far different. Paradoxically, he was perfectly capable of espousing the anti-intellectual bias implicit in such a view of the prospective teacher, but when it came to his actual choice of teachers for his various educational enterprises, he wound up with a regular series of unique individuals--many of whom were men and women of first rate intelligence and scholarly accomplishments--with "ordinary people" conspicuous only by their total absence. Instead, he took to heart Pestalozzi's further dictum that teachers be encouraged to be independent spirits. Along that line, Maclure insisted that "union and concord in instruction . . . reduces all to a level"--and certainly his worst detractor could never

¹⁴George B. Lockwood, The New Harmony Movement (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1905), p. 65.

¹⁵Silber, n. 54.

accuse any of the teachers he hired of anything like "union and concord."¹⁶

Pestalozzi believed that God's help was needed to properly educate, claiming that, "Religion is the unshakable foundation of all education,"¹⁷ and that "a child brought up without trust in God is a motherless waif." He insisted that moral and religious education must form the core of general education, and that eventually the child "no longer dreams of God, he sees Him; he lives in contemplation of Him. He prays to Him."¹⁸ But, Pestalozzi reasoned, since the child must also be prepared for his vocation and his place in society, the more practical aspects of his education must be co-ordinated with moral education. Thus moral education was not to be a matter of talking about religion and virtue, but of awakening moral feelings by sensibly structuring situations.

Maclure was implacably hostile to all organized religion. He found all religious teaching odious, and he railed against "priests who grasp with their pestilential grip the minds of the youth, to stamp upon their tender and

¹⁶ "Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 389.

¹⁷ Silber, p. 294.

¹⁸ Pestalozzi, 174.

unoccupied fancies the lasting impression of their incomprehensible dogmas."¹⁹ But he, too, wanted to develop moral, rational children. Since under the Pestalozzian method morals were to be taught only by indirection, this particular difference between Maclure's ideas and those of Pestalozzi was, in practical terms, merely one of semantics. Where Pestalozzi posited God and religion, Maclure would advance the concept of the greatest good for the greatest number--but in neither case would this overview alter what went on in the classroom.

To summarize, the two men disagreed to at least some extent on such basic issues as: (1) religious beliefs; (2) the sanctity of property; (3) the concept of stewardship; (4) the educational and moral value of home and family life; (5) social mobility; (6) the use of the schools as an instrument of social reform; and (7) teacher recruitment. With the exception of the last subject on the list, all have quite weighty implications both in terms of educational planning and practices. Clearly, it was fortunate indeed for Maclure's faith in Pestalozzian education that Pestalozzi rejected his offer to subsidize the transfer of the system and its founder to the United States. Equally clear is the fact that it was solely Pestalozzi's methodology to which Maclure was so irrevocably committed, and not anything

¹⁹W. Maclure, I, p. 35.

like all of its attendant philosophical baggage.

Yet the total ambience of Pestalozzi's school at Yverdon impressed Maclure greatly. Otherwise it is hard to understand his comparative indifference to the educational program of Philipp von Fellenberg, another well-known Swiss educator. Fellenberg, who had been a childhood playmate of Pestalozzi's son, Jacquel, adopted many of Pestalozzi's principles in operating a school at nearby Hofwyl. So similar, in fact, were the two countrymen's ideas that there was some talk of a merger of their institutions. Maclure visited Fellenberg's school on several occasions, but he must have considered Hofwyl a mere copy of Yverdon. He credited Fellenberg with having "done much for the introduction of . . . practical education," and added that Fellenberg made good use of the Pestalozzian system.²⁰ However, in marked contrast to his perpetual paeans to Pestalozzi, this is the only instance in his extensive writings that Maclure so much as mentioned Fellenberg's school. What makes Maclure's attitude all the more strange is that casual visitors tended to be more impressed by Hofwyl than by Yverdon. At Hofwyl there were discipline, order, and financial success, all of which should have appealed to Maclure's practical side; and Fellenberg's House of Industry, a school for poor children

²⁰ Ibid., I, 87.

that emphasized the teaching of agricultural and home-industrial labor, should also have found his heartiest approval. The answer to Maclure's lack of interest in publicizing Fellenberg may lie in the latter's insistence on a rigid segregation of social classes, which resulted in the division of his school into several branches, each organized for a particular social class and its appropriate type of education. While this was a point in the school's favor amongst most of its visitors, Maclure had to find the practice repugnant to his deeply felt democratic ideals.

III

Promethean Reformer: The Initial Phase

Maclure, acting with uncharacteristic impulsiveness, had been so impressed by what he had seen at Yverdon that he approached Pestalozzi and urged him to come, under his patronage, to Philadelphia, there to establish a beachhead for his excellent method. Pestalozzi was flattered, but declined, offering as reasons his advanced age (59), and his lack of knowledge of English. He recommended that Joseph Neef, a former teacher at Yverdon, whom he had placed in charge of a school in Paris, be employed in his place.

Neef had initially been educated for the priesthood, but had renounced the church. He joined Napoleon's army, was seriously wounded at the Battle of Arcola, and, embittered with the brutality of war, withdrew from military life. Having decided that "the education of children and rearing of vegetables" were the only occupations for which he felt he had "any aptitude," Neef next turned to teaching.¹

In the year 1800, having been recommended by mutual friends, Neef joined Pestalozzi's staff. He taught music, gymnastics, and French. He quickly became a favorite of both Pestalozzi and the pupils. So much so, in fact, that

¹Joseph Neef, Sketch of a Plan and Method of Education (Philadelphia: Printed for the author, 1808), p. 2.

when Pestalozzi was asked by a French philanthropic society, which operated a school for forty orphans in Paris, to recommend someone to take charge of the place, he sent Neef. And it was to this school that Pestalozzi now directed Maclure, in order that the philanthropist might observe Neef in action, and decide whether or not the disciple would be an acceptable substitute for the master.

Maclure must have been eminently satisfied with what he saw in Neef, for he lost no time in making him an offer similar to the one he had made to Pestalozzi. He insisted that his adopted country would welcome the Pestalozzian system and that Neef was just the man to introduce it. So eager, in fact, was Maclure to quell whatever fears Neef might have about moving to America, that he waived aside the latter's objection that he, like Pestalozzi, knew no English. Neef recorded the gist of the conversation that convinced him to accept Maclure's patronage:

Mr. Maclure sent for me. 'On what terms,' said the magnanimous patriot, 'would you go to my country and introduce there your method of education? My country wants it, and will receive it with enthusiasm. I engage to pay your passage, to secure your livelihood. Go and be your master's apostle in the new world.' My soul was warmed with admiration at such uncommon generosity. Republican by inclination and principle, . . . I burnt with desire to see that country, to live in, and to be useful to it, which can boast of such citizens. But what still more heightened Mr. Maclure's magnanimity is that I did not at that period understand English at all. But neither this nor any other consideration could stagger his resolution.²

²Ibid., p. 5.

To put the matter on a more terrestrial plane, Maclure signed a contract guaranteeing Neef: free passage to America for himself and his family; and sufficient subsidization so that he would earn at least five hundred dollars a year for three years, during which time he was to learn English.

In attempting to effect the transmission of the Pestalozzian method into the educational bloodstream of the United States, Maclure was undoubtedly more fortunate in obtaining Neef's services than he would have been had he convinced Pestalozzi to emigrate. For Neef's thought was far more congenial to Maclure than was Pestalozzi's. Neef, like his new patron, having no faith in Pestalozzi's reliance on paternalistic rulers, endorsed both the American and French Revolutions, and eagerly accepted the democratic promise he found in American life. He also concurred completely with Maclure in viewing the upper and lower classes as locked in perpetual class warfare, with the lower classes being constantly and unjustly exploited. Thus, he was ideologically equipped to contribute a somewhat Americanized version of Pestalozzianism, which made him, as has been noted by one historian, "more than the lengthened shadow of Pestalozzi in America."³

³Gerald Lee Gutek, "An Examination of Joseph Neef's Theory of Ethical Education," History of Education Quarterly, IX, No. 2 (1969), 187, 195.

Because of the similarity of their political and economic views, it is not so surprising that neither Maclure nor Neef ever regretted the arrangement they made. Twenty years later, Maclure was able to say of Neef that he taught the Pestalozzian system "in greater perfection than ever it was taught before," and that "as a teacher he has made more clever men for the number he was allowed to educate than I believe ever came from any school on earth."⁴ As for Neef, he took his part of the bargain he made with Maclure seriously indeed. He arrived in the United States in 1806, knowing no English at all; but within a little over two years he not only learned the English language--he learned it well enough to write the first strictly pedagogical book published in the United States in English. This book, entitled Sketch of a Plan of a Method of Education, was soon followed with another: The Method of Instructing Children Rationally in the Arts of Reading and Writing. In addition, between books, he threw open the doors of his first boarding school in Philadelphia.

Actually, Neef's Sketch of a Plan was intended to meet the dual purpose of propounding the educational tenets of Pestalozzianism, while at the same time serving as a

⁴"Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclou Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 368.

prospectus to parents interested in enrolling their children in his school. The book is worth examining in some detail. Much of the essential flavor of Pestalozzianism comes through; even more of the personality of Neef; and the educational precepts advanced were virtually identical to those Maclure was to postulate for the New Harmony schools almost twenty years later.

Neef began his work by paying obeisance to a deistic "Providence" which has decreed man to be "essentially an active and sociable being;"⁵ a pledge to utilitarianism followed. These commitments were routinely made, but they were important: the former hinted at the atmospheric framework Neef would have prevail in schools; the latter helped explain the dedication Neef believed natural and logical in a teacher.

There was no false modesty in the openly stated debt to Pestalozzi, whom Neef described as "a man as respectable for the goodness of his heart as for the soundness of his head;" and Neef freely labelled himself "one of his disciples." Acknowledging Pestalozzi as the sole source of his inspiration, he wrote:

My pupils . . . will learn no new things; but they will learn the old things in a new way. This new way is Pestalozzi's method. Pestalozzi does not attempt to introduce anything into his pupil; but to develop what

⁵Neef, p. 1.

he finds in him. His pupil always sets out from the known and plain, and proceeds with slow speediness to the yet unknown and complicated. He leaves no point behind him without being perfect master of it.⁶

Neef, like Pestalozzi, held to the "faculty" theory of education. He believed, for example, that memory could be "improved and perfected the more it is exercised." He planned to teach for at least an hour each day such subjects as observing, examining, analyzing, judging, and describing. His commitment to sense realism led him to insist on a teaching method consistent with it. He wrote:

All possible knowledge, which in any way we shall be able to derive from our own senses and immediate sensations, shall be exclusively derived from them. The second source, to which we shall next resort, but only in those cases where the first will be absolutely inaccessible, shall be our memory; our third resource, shall be analogy. Human evidence shall not be neglected; but we shall have recourse to it only when all the foregoing means prove insufficient and unsuccessful. Books, therefore, shall be the last fountain from which we shall endeavor to draw our knowledge.

It is irrevocably decided . . . that my pupils shall pry into no book . . . till they are able not only to comprehend what they read, but also to distinguish perfectly well good from bad; truth from falsehood; reality from chimera; and probabilities from absurdities. God's beauteous and prolific creation, all nature shall be their book, and facts their instructors. But as soon as they have reached the necessary maturity, then, and only then, they shall read; then their reading will be really useful, and both instructive and pleasing to them.⁷

And in the actual operation of his school Neef was as good as his word. One of his pupils related: "During four years I

⁶Ibid., pp. 2, 46-47.

⁷Ibid., pp. 8-11, 13, 15.

saw no book, nor was I taught my alphabet."⁸

Happily Neef discarded a somewhat stilted tone as his Sketch outlined for the parents of prospective pupils just what sort of school he hoped to operate. Mocking traditional methods of teaching, he first jibed at the way children were being educated merely to memorize and regurgitate facts, and then described his concept of what constituted proper method:

My pupils will be compelled to guess, and . . . to observe, to examine, to investigate things of themselves. I shall teach them nothing; nay, far from teaching them anything, I shall learn everything with them, and in so doing I shall be among them of all others the most dull of apprehension; and especially the most incredulous.

My pupils shall never believe what I tell them because I tell it them, but because their own senses and understandings convince them that it is true.⁹

Continuing in the same vein, Neef confessed that he planned to keep his pupils awake by deliberately putting forth wrong answers occasionally, and by cheerfully accepting corrections. He stated:

I . . . shall require and exact of my pupils to tell me as loud as they can and as they please, that I am wrong, whenever their understanding tells them that I am really so.

The grave, doctoral, magisterial, and dictatorial tone shall never insult their ears; . . . they shall probably never hear of a cat o' nine tails; . . . I shall be nothing else but their friend and guide, their school fellow, play fellow, and messmate. Childish and puerile

⁸Will Seymour Monroe, "Joseph Neef and Pestalozzianism in America," Education, XIV, No. 8 (1894), 453.

⁹Neef, pp. 27, 162.

will be our operations, our expressions, and our whole language. But do not forget, pray that our business is with children.¹⁰

As he began to outline the curriculum, Neef was again at pains to indicate his intention to radically depart from standard practices. Here, too, he was ready to extend his democratic approach to teaching. He intended to allow the children to play a major role in determining what should go on, declaring, "In all our deliberations, I shall have but one vote."¹¹

In the matter of physical education, a subject then generally not even considered the proper concern of the school, Neef argued:

Let not the very learned be alarmed at my project of teaching my pupils to play; by play I mean exercise, and I mean to convert this toil into pleasure.

That our bodily faculties ought to be unfolded and improved; that, therefore, we ought to have a means fitted for unfolding and improving them, is one of the great pivots on which all my notions of education turn. I shall, consequently, endeavor to contrive proper exercises to effect that purpose.

Our gymnastical exercises will be performed in an open, airy, level place. Stiffness, constraint, even strict regularity shall be banished from our first exercises.

My pupils shall run, jump, climb, slide, skate, bathe, swim. . . . They shall exert their adroitness, display their dexterity, and exercise their bodily force, just as much as they please, or at least as it is rational to allow them.¹²

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 17, 24-25, 27-28, 41, 164-65.

¹¹Ibid., p. 88.

¹²Ibid., pp. 103-04.

Good republicans that they were, both Neef and Maclure were highly suspicious of a standing army. In its place they very much preferred a militia. Therefore, it is logical, if a bit unexpected, to find Neef proclaiming that he would train boys along military lines, with division into squads, drills, even use of firearms. In this sphere, he believed, "A severe discipline will be found necessary;" but in return he promised, "Good riflemen, excellent foot soldiers, we shall most assuredly become."¹³

Turning to the more staid subject areas, Neef must have indeed gladdened Maclure with his repudiation of classical education. Said Neef, "I care very little about what is called a liberal, learned, and classical education. I believe that the education of a rational man ought to be rational, and nothing more." What this meant in terms of his curriculum was that Neef somewhat grudgingly proposed to teach Greek and Latin, but only because it was "the style;" and he added, "I consider the study of either ancient or modern foreign languages as a very unimportant point of education." As for the study of history, a subject Maclure considered a worthless, impractical waste of time, Neef agreed, freely admitting that he wanted no

¹³Ibid., p. 109. See also: William Maclure, Opinions on Various Subjects, (3 vols.; New Harmony, Indiana: Printed at the school press, 1831-1838), II, 553, 584-85.

professor of history in his school.¹⁴

Neef was anxious to be consistent with what he termed "sacred precepts" in Pestalozzian thought. Thus he quoted Pestalozzi: "Imitate nature; begin with what is simple, plain, known by what you find in the child; dwell on each point till the learner is master of it."¹⁵ This dictum led Neef to propound several specific techniques. For example:

Reading is a consequence of writing; and therefore my pupils shall learn to write before they learn to read; or rather they shall do both at the same time.

And:

Do not imagine . . . that I shall take the trodden path in teaching my pupils the common system of numeration, the rules of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and so forth. This will most assuredly not be the case. They shall themselves contrive and invent all those matters.

As it is evident that all our numerical notions proceed from objects, we shall, of course, begin our studies by them. Easily moveable things, as beans, little stones, marbles shall be our first instructors.¹⁶

In describing his views concerning age levels and class size Neef managed to be both frank and effervescent. He assured parents:

My pupils shall all march together upon the same time. I shall, therefore, specially insist upon their

¹⁴Neef, pp. 111, 114, 121, 150-51. See also: W. Maclure, I, 229.

¹⁵Neef, p. 121.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 16, 33, 48.

being nearly of the same age. Under six and above eight, none will be received. If they are totally ignorant, so much the better! for whatever they have learned, they will be obliged to forget it, in order to learn it again in my own way.

The number of my pupils shall by no means exceed forty; because I think this quantity of young frolicsome wags will be quite sufficient for fairly exercising my patience and all other pedagogical talents of mine. As soon as this number shall be completed, I shall enter upon the business--later applications will be to no avail.¹⁷

As to school hours, and even number of years required, Neef was delightfully vague:

During the whole first year, but four hours a day will be devoted to our studies. By graduation we shall become more curious, we shall become desirous of extending our knowledge; our studiousness will increase, and in proportion to this increase of studiousness, the time requisite for our studies shall augment.

The time which this unclassical, this elementary education will require, I cannot exactly point out. At random, however, I think that from the sixth to the twelfth year, we shall not fail of ample occupations.¹⁸

Neef obviously wanted to follow Pestalozzi in throwing open his boarding school to interested parents and visitors. But knowing himself well enough to realize that he lacked Pestalozzi's diplomatic skill, he warned:

Our house shall be open to every one who shall feel any curiosity to see our maneuvers. To prevent, however, my future visitors from all kind of astonishment, I must apprise them beforehand, that they will probably find me rather refractory to the common laws of civility. I know very well that politeness is the indispensable duty of a sociable and social man, but I also know that there

¹⁷Ibid., p. 144.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 166.

are duties of different descriptions. To take care of my pupils, will be my supreme duty.¹⁹

In the above passage Neef was not indulging in rhetorical conceit when he referred to "our house" and "our maneuvers." For all of Neef's educational enterprises in America were, to a considerable extent, family ventures. His wife had received a Pestalozzian education; her brother had, in fact, become a professor at Yverdon. She and the five Neef children, four daughters and a son, all, at various times engaged in teaching. In the two schools Neef was to operate in Philadelphia, his children were too young to join his staff; but that he counted on his wife to help out, at least in a commissarial role was indicated by his Gallic frankness in admitting, "I chose my wife not for a glossy surface, but such other qualities as I thought would wear well. Mistress Neef . . . is an excellent contriver in housekeeping."²⁰

Surely nothing in Neef's Sketch brings out so clearly, so winningly, his own essential character--his zest in facing the challenge of teaching, his joy in the company of youth, his pride, his brusque frankness--as his final recruiting message to parents. The pull it exerts is strong enough to tug one across the pages of history, to damn time for making

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 166-67.

it impossible to entrust one's children to such a man:

Well then, father or mother, have you got any little mettlesome, inquisitive, sprightly, teasing . . . fellow, every moment putting your patience to the test; this is just what I want.

If . . . you have resolution enough not to care for the old methods of schoolmasters, . . . I offer you my services as a teacher, not as a mere mercenary, but as a friend. Please to take notice of this distinction, and do not expect I shall . . . talk of patronage, favor, gratitude. I can do without favors; I want . . . neither a patron nor patronage.

If you entrust me with the education of your son, it is either for want of leisure, or for want of capacity to discharge this grand, this first duty of a parent yourself. You must, therefore, look upon me, who do for you what you cannot do, as a man, as a friend, who renders to you and your son, the greatest service, which one man can render to or expect from another.²¹

Little wonder that Neef could elicit considerable praise from fellow teachers and former pupils such compliments as the following: "Neef's unprejudiced mind and enlightened mode of teaching have made him many enemies. All are friends of his who aren't blind in fanaticism, or envious."²² That tribute was delivered by Gerard Troost, a teaching colleague, and echoed by one Paul Brown, a man who was noted for his low opinion of just about everything and everyone. Then there was Robert Dale Owen, eldest son of Maclure's future partner at New Harmony, who termed Neef "simple, straightforward, and cordial," and practitioner of

²¹ Ibid., pp. 164-65.

²² Paul Brown, Twelve Months in New Harmony (Cincinnati: William Hill Woodward, 1827), p. 95.

"an excellent mode of teaching, with all his roughness,
 . . . a general favorite alike with children and adults."²³

And one of Neef's pupils at Yverdon provided a fond reminiscence of life in Neef's class:

Joy reached its climax when our . . . master, Neef, with his particular charm . . . marched with the air of a trooper at the head of sixty or eighty children, his great voice thundering a Swiss air; then he enchanted the whole school. I should say that Neef, in spite of his rudeness of exterior, was the pupils' favorite, and for this reason he lived always with them, and felt happiest when amongst them. He played, exercised, walked, bathed, threw stones with the pupils, all in a childish spirit; this is how he had such unlimited authority over them.²⁴

This then was the man whose work as an educator Maclure chose to subsidize. And in 1809, with Maclure's backing, Neef opened his first American school. It was located just outside Philadelphia, and was initially termed a success, with a full enrollment of pupils "from the best families in Philadelphia."²⁵

School life for the pupils of Neef's school went pretty much as he had outlined it in his Sketch. One of his Philadelphia pupils has written about it:

²³Robert Dale Owen, Threading my Way (London: Trubner & Co., 1874), p. 253.

²⁴Will Seymour Monroe, History of the Pestalozzian Movement in the United States (Syracuse: C. W. Bardeen, 1907), p. 64.

²⁵Caroline Dale Snedeker, The Town of the Fearless (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1931), p. 78.

I saw no book! The chief subjects taught us orally were the languages, mathematics, and the natural sciences, and the idea was to make us understand the object and application of all that we learned. Our outdoor life was equally curious. We never wore hats, winter or summer, and many of us went barefooted also during the warm weather. Our master, hatless as ourselves, would lead us on agriculture, botany, mineralogy, and the like, in a pleasant, descriptive way, and pointing out to us their practical illustration in the grain fields, the gardens, the rocks, the streams along our route. We were encouraged in all athletic sports, were great swimmers and skaters, walkers, and gymnasts. In the pleasant weather, we went to bathe twice every day in the Schuylkill with Neef, who was an accomplished swimmer, at our head. It was possibly owing to these exercises being taken in common with our master that there existed between Neef and his pupils a freedom so great as to be sometimes, I fear, slightly inconsistent with good breeding or the deference due from pupil to teacher. But this seemed a part of the thoroughly good-tempered simple-mannered and amiable man without an atom of false pride or pedagogism.²⁶

But for some reason enrollment fell off, and the school was forced to close its doors. Perhaps Neef's educational ideas were too advanced; perhaps the personal untidiness and absentmindedness some of his acquaintances accused him of extended to financial mismanagement; more likely the rumor that he espoused atheism caused parents to withdraw their children. In connection with the latter possibility, the teaching of anti-religious principles was a charge which was to be hurled at each of the succeeding educational operations established by Maclure and Neef. In Neef's case, the charge was unfair. Maclure was a moral relativist, Neef was not. Neef believed that there was a

²⁶ Ibid., p. 79.

common morality which underlay all religious systems.

This he wanted to explore in his teaching. But he wanted to steer clear of any specific doctrines. In his Sketch, although he did take a slap at the unreasonableness of most religious dogma, he elsewhere promised: "I make here the most solemn declaration that I shall not meddle in any way with the tenets of any sect, or any dogmatical instruction whatsoever."²⁷ However, like Pestalozzi, he refused to utilize the then common practice of catechetical instruction. He condemned the method as repressive, encouraging only parrotlike responses. Since the use of the catechetical method was commonly justified by the claim that it armed the child to defend his religious faith against heretics, such fastidiousness would obviously be held suspect by the religiously zealous.²⁸

Whatever the reason, although he tried in two different locations, Neef's Philadelphia schools did fail. Earlier, in an idealistic mood, he had dramatically claimed:

Should my project of forming my own school miscarry,
 . . . I shall in all likelihood find out some remote,
 obscure village, whose youth want a schoolmaster, Hear
 it, ye men of the world! To become an obscure, useful
 country schoolmaster is the highest pitch of my worldly
 ambition.²⁹

²⁷Neef, p. 75.

²⁸Gutek, pp. 193-95.

²⁹Monroe, Pestalozzian Movement, p. 126.

Apparently, however, even this avenue was closed-- at least temporarily. Reluctantly he turned to farming-- the second of the only two occupations for which he had once deemed himself suited. He bought a farm near Louisville and removed there with his entire family, hoping to be able to resign himself to the bucolic life. But surely it must have been with a heavy heart, and a desire that some day he might return to teaching.

For Maclure also, the shutting down of Neef's school marked a hiatus from active concern with educational reform. Hurt by the indifference of Americans toward the Pestalozzian method, he complained of not having received "an atom of comfort or encouragement, even in words or theory, much less any aid or assistance. Almost all I knew, or communicated with," he continued, "appathetically treated all my schemes with indifference, and not a few of them openly reprobated, as Eutopian and folly, spending my time and money so ridiculously."³⁰

Turning completely to his other love, geology, Maclure proceeded to occupy himself for the next ten years with scientific work. At the commencement of this decade, in the autumn of 1808, he was described by fellow scientist Benjamin Silliman as

³⁰Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 308.

. . . in his meridian. Being a teetotaller, drinking nothing but water and requiring only a moderate quantity of the most common articles of food, his health was perfect, and his frame robust and vigorous. His countenance had a ruddy glow, and his manners were in a high degree winning and attractive. His language was pure and elevated, and his mind being imbued with the love of science, he was successful in exciting similar aspirations in other, and especially younger minds.³¹

Geology was a new science in those days. As Maclure noted, "Geology has not been thought worth the attention of the learned or unlearned, and . . . a great proportion of both treat such investigations with contempt as beneath their notice."³² Part of Maclure's intense interest in the subject may have been a response to yet another challenge: for many of his contemporaries saw in geology a plot to undermine faith in the Bible. In any event, he had need of his excellent physical condition. Although Philadelphia remained his nominal home, he was during this decade (1808-1818) always either going off on yet another expedition, or bringing back his geological notes and boxes of specimens. He was often lost for months to all friends and acquaintances, as he extended his observations from Canada to the Mexican Gulf, and from Maine to the Mississippi--also including the West Indies. In order to obtain correct cross-sections of the Alleghanies, he crossed them fifty

³¹George P. Fisher, Life of Benjamin Silliman (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1866), I, 285.

³²Snedeker, pp. 93-94.

times. He learned to endure privation and thirst, and became accustomed to being received by backwoodsmen with considerable suspicion. His lonely figure, in heavy, thick-soled shoes, always with bag and hammer in hand, breaking rocks as he went, was a sight odd enough to cause the word to spread that a lunatic was at large. He loved to describe to his friends just how leery many settlers were of giving a night's shelter to "a crazy man always breaking rocks."³³ Occasionally the door would be barred, and he would be peered at and interrogated through a crack, until those within had convinced themselves that he was harmless.

In 1809 Maclure presented to the American Philosophical Society an epoch-making geological map of the United States. It quickly established his reputation as America's outstanding geologist; and his Observations on Geology in the United States, published in the same year, was the first important book on that subject written in this country. Before long he was in personal contact or correspondence with leading men of science in America and abroad. Although he was not a trained geologist and had taught himself by observation and reading, he came to be highly respected by his colleagues. Naturalists were scarce

³³ Caroline Dale Snedeker, The Beckoning Road (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1941), p. 152.

in Philadelphia. A group of them who had been getting together informally decided they ought to meet at set times and place. They founded the Academy of Natural Sciences in 1812. Maclure was not one of the charter members, perhaps due to his frequent and protracted absences. Whatever the reason, it was surely not an intended snub. For in the very year that he did become a member (1817) he was elected president, and was re-elected every year thereafter until his death. He was instrumental in getting the Academy Journal started, buying a small printing press and having the publication printed in his home. Most important for his eventual return to an active role as an educational reformer, his connection with the Academy brought him into close association with Thomas Say and Gerard Troost, two distinguished scientists who later were to accompany him to New Harmony.

It may have been the severe physical demands his geological surveys made upon him that turned Maclure's attention back to educational reform. Many years later he mentioned that he had been forced to abandon field work as beyond his strength. Whatever the reason, although his educational interests had been forced into the background during his ten years of scientific activity, they were far from moribund. His further adventures in pedagogy involved him more deeply than ever, not only with his old and trusted

friend, Neef, but with other equally fascinating and bizarre characters as well. However, his early role as a Prometheus of educational reform had set the guidelines: his future efforts were generated by the same concerns; and he remained ever faithful to the pedagogical ideas that first captured his enthusiasm.

IV

The Promethean Role Resumed

If it was not the deterioration of Maclure's physical condition, it may have been the discouraging plight that Pestalozzian education was experiencing at its very source that rekindled his desire to do something positive to spread its gospel. For Pestalozzi and his work at Yverdon had fallen on evil times. In 1815 internecine squabbles and jealousies had resulted in sixteen of his teachers leaving him in a body in protest against what they considered his favoritism toward an unpopular colleague. Shortly thereafter his three chief assistants also quit; and these resignations were followed up by lawsuits, hostile pamphlets, and public statements that involved scurrilous misrepresentations. Maclure placed the blame for the trouble not only on the ambition and bad conduct of the old-fashioned type schoolmasters that Pestalozzi had been "induced by the public to employ," but also on "the folly of parents" who had insisted upon the adulteration of "the method."¹ It was completely

¹William Maclure, Opinions on Various Subjects, (3 vols.; New Harmony, Indiana: Printed at the school press, 1831-1838), II, 624.

in character that he would begin to think of setting himself the task of keeper of the Pestalozzian flame.

This time, however, the United States was not to be the fertile garden in which the Pestalozzian seed was to be planted. That nation's indifference to the teachings of Neef had hurt Maclure deeply. Instead, therefore, both Spain and France were chosen as sites in which the Pestalozzian method was to be given new life. The Spanish venture was by far the larger commitment. Maclure learned of the liberal constitution adopted by the Cortes in 1819; he immediately presumed that the long down-trodden Spaniards were now free and ready to be educated. With characteristic impulsiveness, and armed with both faith and funds, he quickly swept into Spain. There, according to his brother, Alexander, "being pleased with that fine country and the prospect of a free government under the rule of the Cortes-- he made considerable purchases of land and also invested funds in the Government Securities."²

The land William purchased, 10,000 acres near Alicante, had been confiscated from the Church when the liberals took over the reins of government. He planned to establish there a great agricultural school. It was

²Letter from Alexander Maclure to Samuel G. Morton (In the Samuel G. Morton Papers, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia).

to operate on Pestalozzian lines, combining the best features of what Pestalozzi had attempted at Yverdon and Fellenberg had tried at Hofwyl. In Maclure's school physical labor and the moral and intellectual aspects of each pupil's nature were to be brought into harmony with each other; and the masses would thus be educated for self-maintenance and self-government.

Buildings on the estate were repaired and converted for Maclure's purpose, and he was ready to open the school when, in April of 1823, the liberals were overthrown in a counter-revolution. Maclure was forced to flee the country. The estate was immediately confiscated and returned to the Church; and Maclure, of course, received no compensation.

This second failure to transplant Pestalozzianism, much more costly and abortive than the American adventure had been, left Maclure admittedly disappointed and mortified. He might well have once more turned his back on educational reform; for he immediately made plans to study the geological formation of the Spanish Peninsula. But the nearby activities of bands of robbers, who did a brisk business in kidnapping and ransoming their victims, caused him to abandon this project also.

At the same time he was struggling to operate his school in Spain, Maclure had also involved himself in the sponsorship of two Pestalozzian schools in Paris, one for boys, conducted by Guillelme Sylvan Casimir Phiquepal

D'Arusmont, and another for girls, run by Madame Marie Duclos Fretageot. Although both of these instructors were to be closely involved with Maclure in other educational projects, neither of these schools had lived up to expectations, either. However, at this point he was not ready to blame any of his instructors. Instead, he was completely disgusted by the "folly, stupidity and cruelty of despotism" he saw everywhere about him.³ For Spain's government had not been the only one that had frustrated his efforts. While revisiting Yverdon in the summer of 1820, he had sent a complete set of Pestalozzi's works to D'Arusmont only to have it turned back at the French border. "Not a ray of light," Maclure bitterly observed, "was being permitted to disturb the political and religious obscurity of the Royal French Kingdom. . . ." He further noted "a growth of ignorance springing up" that he feared would "chock [choke] all the raison of the revolution" and plunge the French nation into "darkness and barbarizm."⁴

D'Arusmont (who was in 1831 to become the husband of Frances Wright), had taught for a brief time at one of

³ "Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 305.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 302-03.

Neef's schools in Philadelphia. (In America, both then and when he returned again in 1824, D'Arusmont democratically shortened his name to William B. Phiquepal; so from this point forward he will be referred to by that name). His particular strength as a teacher of the Pestalozzian method apparently was in the area of teaching the trades. Miss Wright, at least, was quite impressed with his amazing ability to analyze and simplify "the operations of different workmen, then communicate to his pupils the process peculiar to almost all the leading trades--carpentering, blacksmithing, weaving, tailoring, shoemaking, hatmaking, etc.--and all of these were studied and practiced by the same youths who changed their occupations in rotation."⁵ He also contributed several teaching devices, an arithmometer and a sonometer, the former designed to reduce Euclidian propositions to the comprehension of a child of five or six years old, the latter a help in music instruction. Just exactly what these teaching aids were must remain a mystery, for there exists no description of them.

Despite the favorable impression his teaching had made on Miss Wright (an impression not shared by some of

⁵William Randall Waterman, Frances Wright (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 233. See also: V. F. Calverton, Where Angels Dare to Tread (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., c. 1941), p. 185.

his pupils and teaching colleagues), Phiquepal had returned to Paris, where in 1814, at the mature age of thirty-five, he abandoned teaching to take up the study of medicine. After six years of study, he was offered a prestigious medical post; but by this time his interest, like that of Maclure, had become once more fixed upon educational reform. So when Maclure, enthused by Phiquepal's supposed improvements on the Pestalozzian method, offered to help him establish a small school in Paris, he accepted with alacrity.

The school was set up in Maclure's own home. What with his Spanish project and the example of Pestalozzi's troubles at Yverdon, the philanthropist wanted the Paris operation kept small. He advised Phiquepal not to have any professors or assistants, "as they have constantly injured and in some instances ruined the establishments" given over to the Pestalozzian system.⁶ Yet one assistant, the Madame Marie Duclos Fretageot mentioned earlier, was soon employed--and from the ranks of the very parents whom Maclure usually found so foolish and meddlesome! She must have been the exception that proves the rule, for she was to become far more important to Maclure than any mere instructor of the Pestalozzian method. So close, in fact, did the relationship between the two become that scandal-mongers long

⁶Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 301.

suspected her of being his mistress. Offered as prior proof of her loose morals was a son named Achilles, whom no one believed was the child of her estranged husband. Whatever the case, there was no way Maclure could have been suspected of being the child's father--since his first meeting with the lady had come as a result of Achilles' enrollment in the year 1820 in Phiquepal's school. However, from then on, over the next thirteen years, whenever they were separated, Maclure and Madame Fretageot kept up a voluminous correspondence; and, when, in 1828, ill health caused him to move to Mexico, he left her in charge of his considerable business interests in New Harmony. He chose her to handle his affairs, not only over such long-trusted associates as Joseph Neef and Thomas Say, but over members of his immediate family--a move which occasioned some degree of bitterness on the part of his brother and sisters.

All that, however, came later. In Paris, Madame Fretageot warmly embraced the Pestalozzian method, and her son, at least in Maclure's eyes, was an exemplary representative of its claims. She was therefore soon subsidized by Maclure in the establishment of a girls' school intended to parallel that of Phiquepal. She quickly proved that the ability to charm her patron was not her only asset. She was considered by most of those who observed her teaching as a very forceful, energetic and imaginative teacher. She loved to have all sorts of projects and people to direct.

Maclure came to have more and more faith in her, and though he was capable of clear analysis of the forces that motivated her, he was also prone to be a bit blinded by the high esteem in which he held her. For example, in a letter to Thomas Say he described her as "too proud and too highminded, too well convinced of her superiority to complain of anyone."⁷ Whereas, in actuality her letters to Maclure are full of scathing remarks about a variety of individuals.

Whether due to the mounting disgust her patron felt with Europe's despotic governments, or to her own republican sympathies, very soon after she began her school, Madame Fretageot must have begun to consider the possibility of establishing a similar institution in the United States. For on June 13, 1820, Maclure wrote to her that, despite his having lost something of his faith in America as the citadel of common sense, should she think it in her interest to go there, he would aid her "with all the recommendation or anything else in my power."⁸ And by July of 1821, Maclure had been persuaded, despite his suspicion that prejudices were as strong in America as they were in Europe, to give both financial and moral support to Madame Fretageot's

⁷ Letter from William Maclure to George W. Ewing: February 20, 1830 (In the Workmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

⁸ Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 502.

plans for transplanting her school to the United States. She left Paris on July 10, 1821, and did not reach New York until September, after a passage of forty-seven days. She quickly settled in Philadelphia, and wrote to her sponsor that she would be ready to receive pupils on the 20th of November. She also mentioned having made contact with John Griscom, a professor of chemistry at Columbia, and Dr. Philip M. Price, a young Philadelphia physician. These contacts were significant for the future because both men shared her growing interest in the educational and social theories of Robert Owen. Griscom, in fact, had spent three days with Owen at New Lanark in 1819, and was preparing to publish an account of the visit.⁹

Another important contact for the future was Charles A. Lesueur. This distinguished artist and zoologist, whom Maclure had brought to America as a traveling companion in 1815, and with whom he had surveyed the West Indies in 1816-1817, taught drawing and painting three times a week in Madame Fretageot's school in Philadelphia. The school did reasonably well, if judged either by the longevity of other Maclure-sponsored Pestalozzian institutions or by enrollment. By July of 1823 there were eighteen scholars enrolled, whose

⁹ Ibid., 303. See also: Caroline Dale Snedeker, The Town of the Fearless (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1931), p. 3.

combined tuition amounted to \$2,800.00; and by November of 1824, the class size had increased to twenty-six. It was at this time that Robert Owen paid her a visit, and from then on, her thoughts turned increasingly toward migration to New Harmony.

In the meantime, Phiquepal had continued to operate his school for boys in Paris. During this period he apparently engendered none of the animosity Maclure was later to feel toward him. Probably the conflict was longer in coming because Maclure, even though the school was situated in his own home, tended to stay out of Phiquepal's way. He ruefully admitted:

My presence in Paris could not possibly be of any use to Mr. Phiquepal, as I have never been able to change the opinions of any of my servants in France respecting the most trifling deviation from their rotin [routine]. People that won't reason can't be convinced. They always agree . . . that I was right, but in acting allways followed their old rotin.¹⁰

There can be little doubt that Phiquepal could be-- Frances Wright's favorable opinion notwithstanding--difficult. He was extremely vain, sensitive about imagined slights, and boastful of his personal achievements. His wife's biographers have characterized him as fundamentally disloyal and ungrateful. They further assert that these qualities were what eventually caused Madame Fretageot to develop her unforgiving

¹⁰Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 302.

hatred of him: he deserted Maclure's patronage for that of Robert Owen when the two had their falling out.¹¹ Robert Dale Owen, who was a teaching colleague at New Harmony, has left a description of Phiquepal, picturing him as

a man well informed on many points, full of original ideas, some of practical value, but withal, a wrong-headed genius; whose extravagance and wilfulness and inordinate self-conceit destroyed his usefulness. He gained neither the good-will nor the respect of his pupils.¹²

This was certainly true of at least one of Phiquepal's students. Achilles Fretageot thought for many years that the first thing he had to do when he achieved manhood was to kill his old tutor.¹³ Maclure, too, eventually came to despise him, denouncing him as extravagant, vain, a "madman," especially "dangerous" because he was capable of exerting considerable influence over others.¹⁴

These feelings, however, were all in the future. What ended Maclure's patronage of Phiquepal's school in Paris was again the noxious interference of governmental authorities. To facilitate the teaching of spelling,

¹¹A. J. G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Frances Wright (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939), pp. 149, 216.

¹²Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way (London: Trubner & Co., 1874), p. 252.

¹³Perkins & Wolfson, op. cit., p. 149.

¹⁴Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 377.

Phiquepal had installed a printing press in Maclure's home. The Bourbon government so little appreciated the innovative practicality of such a step that the police were sent to inspect the institution. This, according to Miss Wright, was what encouraged Maclure to find sanctuary for his eccentric instructor and four of his pupils, including Achilles Fretageot, in Philadelphia.¹⁵

Nowhere in his writings does Maclure mention any of this; so perhaps the real reasons for the move were a bit more prosaic. For one thing, Madame Fretageot had written to Phiquepal coaxing him to come with her son to America. Couching her invitation in the flattering phrases so natural to her, she assured him that "the disciple does so well that the master shall be received with greatest pleasure."¹⁶ For another, Maclure was tired of whipping a dead horse. He admitted sadly that he had hoped that Pestalozzianism "might spread" throughout France, but that such thinking had proven "premature." Of that nation, he observed bitterly, "Knowledge is still monopolized and in the possession of that class who have a direct and immediate interest in the propagation of the

¹⁵ Perkins & Wolfson, p. 114. See also: Waterman, pp. 232-33.

¹⁶ Nora C. Fretageot, "Extracts from the Letters of Madame Marie Duolos Fretageot" (Compiled in Special Collection. Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana), p. 11.

most brutal ignorance."¹⁷ Madame's urging and apparent success may have combined with his and Phiquepal's discouragement with the Old World to convince them that America offered a more fertile soil for educational reforms. In any event, Phiquepal and his four young charges arrived on December 29, 1824. Maclure was not with them, having remained abroad to visit Great Britain once more, and while there, assemble necessary books and instruments for his Philadelphia schools.

Given Maclure's frame of mind, Britain was a strange choice; for it had long represented to him the ultimate symbol of the aristocratic system he so detested. But what he now found there amazed him and considerably raised his spirits. Since he considered education "the most certain thermometer of all useful civilisation," he reported himself "in a state of agreeable feelings approaching extacy . . . to be an Eye witness of the immense progress made in civilisation in so short a time." He went on to add: "Schools for the lower orders are the rage of the day, more encouraged and flattered by the concordance and union of more enlightened and liberal men than at any time or in any country I have visited." He concluded that "the zeal for education in Britain is stronger and more extensive than I have found it

¹⁷Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 301.

in any place on either side of the Atlantic." And the best part of all of his British visit was the three or four days he spent in the Scottish milltown of New Lanark in July, 1824, "contemplating the vast improvement in society effected by Mr. Robert Owen's courage and perseverance in spite of an inveterate and malignant opposition." Terming these few days "the most pleasant of my life," Maclure claimed that he

never saw so many men, women and children with happy & contented countenances, nor so orderly, cheerful & sober a society without any coercion or physical restraint. All the children are taught from 2 years old and upwards in natural history, geography, statics &c., and proves that knowledge is not only power but wealth, as Mr. O. makes more twist in his mills than the same number of hands in any other mill, and so superior that it draws a premium in the market. It gives me more courage to undertake my Experimental farming Schools, seeing how he has succeeded against a powerful combination of both church and state.¹⁸

Warmed by the salubrious educational climate he encountered in Britain, especially at New Lanark, Maclure's memories of despotism in Spain and France, and previous disappointment in America, quickly melted. Actually, his having sponsored Madame Fretageot's and Phiquepal's emigration to Philadelphia offers proof that even prior to his British trip he had been gradually thawing toward the United States. He was now inspired to revive his plan to establish experimental agricultural schools, with the United States to

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 305-06, 307.

be given another chance to prove itself capable of embracing his version of Pestalozzianism. Writing to Madame Fretageot that he still considered "the field of moral experiment in the United States to be the finest in the Globe," he went on to assert that in the matter of sponsoring experimental farming schools "all I have yet done is only a prelude."¹⁹

It is a bit difficult to understand just how Maclure could so blithely transfer his enthusiasm for what he found in England to the United States. True, there had been Madame Fretageot's enthusiastic letter to Piquepal. But had not the new nation proved itself unworthy of Neef's brand of Pestalozzianism; added to that there was now also a very unfavorable report on the natives--and from the very lady who earlier had been so optimistic. Madame Fretageot had had time to observe Americans more closely, and she proceeded to describe to Maclure her opinion of them, writing in her inimitable style:

You have not a just idea how much the people here is far to be reasonable. Each sect tries to overcome the others. Their conversation is so much absurd, so disgusting, they are so ignorant about their true happiness, that every one runs after a fantom and does just as the dog of the fable, which let fall the piece of flesh he had in his mouth to run after the shade he perceived in the water. I observe in all their society, their acting are always stimulated by ostentation, vanity, in short by ignorance.²⁰

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 307.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 304.

Perhaps Maclure drew a parallel: if Britain could in the space of a decade become enlightened in the matter of pedagogical reform, why not the United States? Certainly the wide availability of large tracts of cheap land would appeal to him. But probably more influential than any mundane consideration was his thoroughgoing democratic spirit. Viewing educational reform as but the cornerstone, however essential, upon which society itself was to be reformed, he must have realized that such a comprehensive program as he envisioned could obviously only have a chance to come to fruition in a very tolerant atmosphere. To hope to be permitted even to so much as espouse freely many of his ideas, to say nothing of taking steps to put them into practice, would require a lushly liberal soil. The United States had already gained renown for being easy-going in the matter of free speech; it was a republic; and, at least in its less civilized regions, social patterns had not hardened. Also, the success of federalism in the United States encouraged him to hope that "thousands, or hundreds of thousands of small societies" might spring up as a result of the examples he would provide; and these societies would "traffic and deal with each other in the true spirit of equality . . . exchanging labor for labor, without permitting avarice to introduce its poison in the form of coin-wasting none of their labor

in counteracting or injuring one another."²¹

In the City of Brotherly Love a regular coterie of Maclure's friends, including those teachers and scientists he had been influential in persuading to come to America, eagerly awaited his presence. Along with the two imported French pedagogues two other key members of the Philadelphia group, both from the standpoint of their stature as men of science and their future connection with Maclure, were Gerard Troost and Thomas Say. Troost was a distinguished mineralogist and geologist, professor at the Philadelphia Museum and at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, and one of the founders of the Academy of Natural Science. Say, unlike the others closest to Maclure, had been born in Philadelphia, of Quaker stock. He, too, was a charter member of the Academy. In 1821 he had become professor of zoology at the Philadelphia Museum, and was generally respected as the greatest American zoologist of his time.²² With the possible exception of Madame Fretageot, Say was to be Maclure's most constant companion and most trusted friend during the New Harmony years. Already the two men had made several extensive geological expeditions together.

The main reason why all his Philadelphia friends so

²¹W. Maclure, I, 38-39, 40.

²²Morris Hilquit, History of Socialism in the United States (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1910), p. 59.

impatiently awaited Maclure's arrival from Europe was that the same Robert Owen whose model industrial village Maclure had visited the previous summer had entered their midst, and with his freely acknowledged persuasiveness, had instantly managed to interest them all in the possibility of participating in his widely publicized projected utopia on American soil. Especially smitten by the sweep and grandeur of Owen's plans were Maclure's two Pestalozzian pathfinders, Madame Fretageot and Monsieur Phiquepal.

As early as September 10, 1824, Maclure had been aware of Owen's intention to make "the United States the field of his future experiments." Although he had at this point given no thought whatsoever to joining forces with Owen, he wrote to Benjamin Silliman that Owen's "liberal, philanthropic intentions cannot fail to interest all true friends of humanity."²³ And on the same day he wrote much more expansively on the subject in a letter to Madame Fretageot:

Mr. Robert Owen of New Lanark is now here and intends making the United States the theatre of his future experiments on the facility of rendering the human species happy, and proving the infinite satisfaction, pleasure and happiness derived from the attempt of such a self approbating work. Nothing on earth can give more satisfaction and pleasure than the certainty of the only man in Europe who has a proper idea of mankind and the use he ought to make of his faculties is going to join the

²³Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 308.

finest and most rational Society on the Globe. Mr. O. means to sail in one of the New York packets from Liverpool the end of this month or beginning of next to make arrangements for one of the most beneficent experiments ever attempted by either public or private, and if it succeeds (which I sincerely wish and hope and think it will, so far as to encourage others in a more advanced state of civilisation to follow his example) will mark an epoch in the history of man that will elevate him far above what he has yet been or perhaps expected to be.²⁴

What Maclure was not aware of was the desire on the part of so many of his closest Philadelphia friends to see him and Robert Owen join forces, a desire shared, and in fact engendered by Owen himself. Since Owen was to eventually have his way, and in the process of having it, deeply enmesh Maclure in his visionary schemes, it is time to examine in some detail his previous career.

²⁴Ibid., p. 309.

V

Robert Owen

To more fully understand the seismic wave Robert Owen was capable of producing among Maclure and the Philadelphia intellectuals, it is necessary to review his earlier career as a social and educational reformer. Considering the very impressive list of credits, whole or partial, his biographers (and he, himself) accord him, Owen, like Maclure, today languishes in relative obscurity. For he has been termed: the "Father of Socialism;" the pioneer of factory legislation in Great Britain; the founder of the cooperative movement; the innovator of the nursery school; and the premier oracle of non-sectarian communitarianism in both England and America. He is also deemed to have had a great influence in the establishment in America of the concept of state responsibility for free public education; and he was one of the earliest influential advocates of equal rights for women. Undoubtedly his place in history's pantheon would be much more prominent had his exit from public attention been more graceful or more dramatic. For in his later life Owen failed to channel his energy, but rather allowed it to be dissipated in a series of odd little rivulets of reform. However, at the moment of his descent

upon Maclure's Philadelphia crowd and his flattering whirlwind courtship of them, Owen was at the height of his powers and his fame--or as many would have it--notoriety.

The personification of the self-made man, Owen had distinguished himself sharply from fellow industrialists of his day by refusing to dodge responsibility for the most sinister and tragic aspects of the industrial revolution; and far more impressive to the general public--he had made social reform a paying proposition! After a meteoric rise from humble beginnings, he had become, in a manner that can only be described as pure Horatio Alger, manager and part owner of the cotton mills at New Lanark, a typical Scotch company town. As such, he never sought to change New Lanark's primary character as a business establishment; yet from the outset, although always hampered by the more prosaic opinions and pecuniary interests of a succession of partners, Owen's management of the mills and of the town was of a very different nature from that of any of his contemporaries. His original conception of his role was conventional enough: to maintain "order and regularity throughout the establishment."¹ But he quickly became aware of the importance of the human element, the morale factor, in the factory system. Without ceasing to regard himself as the

¹Robert Owen, The Life of Robert Owen (New York: Alfred A. Knopp, 1920), I, 23.

operator of a highly successful business enterprise, he proceeded to make clear the possible interrelationship between profits and enlightened stewardship. In the process he came to be considered one of the big success stories of the early years of the industrial revolution.

In New Lanark Owen had an isolated community with a population of roughly two thousand; as proprietor of the mills he could, with a minimum of interference from outside, direct the entire population along lines dictated by his ideas for social reconstruction. Thus the field for reform was a fertile one. About five hundred of his residents were children from the parish workhouses who had been apprenticed to the mills. He described the rest of the population as ". . . a collection of the most ignorant and destitute from all parts of Scotland, possessing the usual characteristics of poverty and ignorance. They were generally indolent and much addicted to theft, drunkenness and falsehood, with all their concomitant evils. . . ."2

Owen thought of the problems of the village in collective, social terms, not individualistic ones. He threw out the idea of individual responsibility, and was consistent in viewing the slothfulness, thievery, drunkenness, and prostitution he found prevalent in the town as

²Frank Podmore, Robert Owen (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1924), I, 81.

results of social maladjustment, not personal depravity. He proceeded to devise a multitude of practical expedients to forestall misdeeds rather than punish the wrongdoers. In direct contrast to his method in later years, when he was apt to advance the most elaborate scheme of social regeneration and demand that his hearers put it into practice at once, he was prepared at New Lanark to give his human material the same thoughtful, unobtrusive study that he had given to machinery and the cotton making process earlier in his career.

Owen's first efforts at reform were directed at cleaning up the streets and houses and getting rid of the shops where liquor was sold. He abolished all systems of punishment for delinquent workmen, sought to correct their shortcomings by kind admonition, and he voluntarily reduced their hours of labor and increased their pay.

Each of these earlier reforms was attended with difficulties; superintendents of the different branches of the mills regarded Owen as a dangerous eccentric and blocked his schemes wherever possible. Worse, the workmen were by no means friendly to his projects. They suspected some devious motive behind each innovation. Owen's insistence upon cleanliness and good order in the village streets caused much grumbling; his committee of inspectors of homes was initially labelled by infuriated housewives "the bug-hunters."

The millhands became convinced of Owen's sincere

interest in their welfare only after Owen convinced his partners that the workers should be paid full wages during a four month period when, due to an embargo laid upon the export of cotton by the United States, they were unable to work because no raw material was available. From then on there is evidence of nothing but a mounting tide of mutual trust and affection between Owen and his employees.

After this incident Owen was able to turn his thoughts more steadily to the building and operation of what he deemed proper schools. Earlier he had provided playgrounds for the young children; for he felt very keenly the importance of supervised play in forming good habits. Now, at the end of eight years of preliminary reforms and with the feeling of finally having the workers' confidence, Owen undertook to reconstruct the very foundation of the town's social character by establishing a school in the community in which he could educate children upon the three basic principles that he had become convinced were the starting points for reforming the human race:

1. Man does not form his own character; it is formed for him by the circumstances that surround him.
2. Man is not a fit subject for praise or blame.
3. Any general character, good or bad, may be given to the world, by applying means which are, to a great extent, under the control of human government.³

³William E. Wilson, The Angel and the Serpent (Bloomington, Indiana: The University of Indiana Press, 1964), p. 100.

The school buildings then standing were not nearly extensive enough to enable Owen to put into practice his ideas on education. The kind of community school that he had in mind would cost a good deal both initially and for upkeep. To Owen, this was of little consequence. He stated, "I do not know how any capital can be employed to make such abundant returns as that which is judiciously expended in forming the character and directing the labour of the lower classes."⁴ His original partners, not sharing his zeal for reform, were much alarmed and quickly became reconciled to the idea of disassociating themselves from him. However, his record of unblemished business success enabled him to easily find new partners, men of a somewhat philanthropic mein, who were not seeking large profits, but rather were content to accept a reasonable fixed interest on their capital and--for the time being at least--to leave the rest to him. Now his hands were really free, and he was prepared to use his new power to the fullest extent.

The mills were earning plenty of money, much more than most of the competition; this was due in large measure to Owen's skillful management of purchasing, technique, and lay-out. There was, therefore, no shortage of cash. So up went a community center, which Owen labelled "The New

⁴Rowland Hill Harvey, Robert Owen: Social Idealist (Berkeley: University of California Press, c. 1949), p. 49.

Institution for the Formation of Character." It contained, as well as schools for the children at work in the factory, public halls, community rooms, and a nursery school. School attendance was free for any child of the neighborhood, whether or not its parents were employed in the mills.

The nursery school was the educational innovation in which Owen took the most pride. In his emphasis on the importance of infancy Owen was in full agreement with Maclure. He wrote on the subject:

Much of good or evil is taught to or acquired by a child at a very early period of its life; much of temper or disposition is correctly or incorrectly formed before he attains his second year; many durable impressions are made by the termination of the first twelve or even six months of his existence.⁵

To form the most superior character for the human race, training and education should commence from the birth of the child; and to form a good character they must begin systematically when the child is one year old. From that age no child should be brought up isolated.⁶

Owen, like Maclure, was of the opinion that if the world was to be made over it was first of all necessary to take children away from their parents and thus break the chain of training in the accumulated wrong habits and superstitions of the ages. Thus the nursery school was the crux of the educational plan. As Owen set it up it gave the

⁵Robert Owen, A New View of Society (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1817), p. 81.

⁶Harvey, p. 79.

parents a rationale for all but washing their hands of their children's upbringing; it also removed the children from what he termed, "the erroneous treatment of the yet untrained and untaught parents." For each child was to be

. . . placed in a situation of safety, where, with its future schoolfellows and companions, it will acquire the best habits and principles, while . . . at night it will return to the caresses of its parents; and the affection of each are likely to be increased by the separation.⁷

Children entered the nursery school at the age of eighteen months. The principle on which the school was run was the play principle, no child being forced in any way--not even to a mid-morning rest, though "when any infant felt inclined to sleep it should quietly be allowed to do so." Toys were not allowed, for in Owen's opinion "thirty or fifty infants, when left to themselves, will always amuse each other without any useless childish toys;" and when they become bored "a young active teacher will easily find and provide something they will be interested in seeing and in hearing it explained." Uniform steady kindness was to be, and apparently was, the rule; and from the moment of their first entry the children were to be told that the first principle of the school was "to endeavor to make each other happy." Owen elaborated:

Each child . . . on his entrance into the playgrounds is to be told in language which he can understand, that

he is never to injure his playfellows, but on the contrary he is to contribute all in his power to make them happy.

So simple a precept will be easily taught, and as easily acquired; for the chief employment of the superintendents will be to prevent any deviation from it in practice. The older children, when they have experienced the endless advantages from acting on this principle, will by their example, soon enforce the practice of it on the young strangers; and the happiness which the little groups will enjoy from this rational conduct, will insure its speedy and general and willing adoption. The habit also which they will acquire at this early period of life, by continually acting on this principle, will fix it firmly; it will become easy and familiar to them, or as it is often termed, natural.⁸

All children who attended the day school were furnished with a school uniform. Made of white cotton cloth and formed in the shape of a Roman tunic, the boys' outfit differed from the girls only by being of knee as opposed to ankle length. Clean uniforms were provided three times a week. Children up to five years old attended the infant school. There they spent three hours a day indoors. Then, while the older children continued to attend classes, these youngsters were allowed to play in the large paved area in front of the school. There they were under the supervision of a remarkable young woman, who, according to Owen, found "less difficulty--and without harshness or punishment--in taking charge of, and rendering content and happy, one hundred of these little creatures than most individuals . . .

⁸Margaret Cole, Robert Owen of New Lanark (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), pp. 82-83, 86-87.

experience in conducting a nursery of two or three children."⁹

When the children proceeded from the infant school into the elementary school it was Owen's original intention that they "were not to be annoyed with books." For he, like Maclure, suspected that books were only a hindrance to the formation of character. Interest in reading should be allowed to develop naturally, and, "children should never be directed to read what they cannot understand." However, Owen found it expedient to modify his approach to the teaching of reading "in order to meet the wishes of the parents" who, he complained, wanted his teachers to "commence teaching the children the elements of reading at a very early age." The result was that, as under the Lancasterian method, older children were assigned to read aloud to seven and eight year olds, who were questioned after every few sentences as to what they had just heard. Perhaps fearful of being considered a mere imitator of the monitorial system (especially since he had earlier made substantial contributions to both Lancaster and Bell), Owen was careful to point out that the catechetical responses demanded in such situations by most educators were not encouraged at New Lanark. Instead, answers were "not confined to the author's words." Rather the children were to employ "such expressions as they best understand . . . as

⁹Robert Owen on Education, ed. Harold Silver (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), pp. 151-52.

a proof that they have attended more to the sense than to the sound."¹⁰

This was the extent of the reading program for the very young. Until they reached the age of ten, at which time they became full-time factory employees and only part-time students, no concentrated, systematic attempt was made to teach them reading or writing. Instead, objects were almost exclusively their textbooks--natural objects mostly, from gardens, fields, and woods, and maps and paintings of objects of nature; but even these objects were not explained until the pupils' curiosity about them arose naturally and they began to ask questions. Owen, again like Maclure, did not look with favor upon teaching by rote. He was insistent that the children should have more individual attention from the teacher than was possible under the monitorial system. He also demanded that education be primarily practical. He wrote:

It is comparatively of little avail to give to either young or old precept upon precept, and line upon line, except the means shall be also prepared to train them in good practical habits. Hence an education of the untaught and ill-taught becomes of the first importance to the welfare of society.¹¹

Owen thus aimed at giving a utilitarian education, practical in the sense that it should fit its recipients for

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 65, 152-53, 154.

¹¹ R. Owen, New View, p. 96.

life in a modern community. He was also very much concerned that the children should understand what they were learning and why, and in the process cooperate effectively in the ways open to them, all the while enjoying what they were doing. Everything was made relevant--and relative--for the children. For example, a typical geography lesson might be used to impress upon them that, but for an accident of birth, they might have been Hindus brought up to believe that the taking of animal life was a heinous crime.

The children were continually encouraged to go out into the highways and woods--through which Owen had cut paths and walks--to collect specimens and bring home observations. Whatever formal education was necessary was to be conducted in a framework in which the object aimed at was to make every subject as attractive as possible. Teaching was, as much as possible, by conversation, and by maps, pictures, and natural objects; and attention never allowed to become wearied. To that end no lesson was to exceed three-quarters of an hour in duration. So there were few set lessons and much of the children's time was spent on the playground. As in the infant school, punishment was not to be administered for mis-conduct; the uncooperative child was expected to learn about good and evil from observing the social consequences of his acts.

Because he felt so strongly that children were creatures of circumstances, Owen believed that it was

illogical that any merit should be attached to good behavior; and, conversely, that bad conduct, being entirely a result of improper environment, could not logically carry with it any blame. Therefore, the general principle underlying the whole of the New Lanark system was the exclusion of all artificial rewards or punishments. He insisted that such artificial incentives were harmful because they disguised the operation of natural and social laws, substituting instead false ideals and erroneous notions of the world. There were no prizes for hard work or good conduct; nor was any child punished for idleness or disobedience. The children were taught to find the best incentive to be industrious in the pleasure of learning, and in the spirit of innocent emulation which, Owen believed, was naturally fostered when children were engaged in learning in each other's company. Amiability and good conduct would bring their own reward in the friendly feeling which they engendered in both teachers and fellow-pupils; and where everything was done in kindness, and all restraints were known to be reasonable, and most were imposed in the interests of the children themselves, there would be little temptation to disobedience. Or so Owen thought; and the general testimony of those who saw the system in operation largely credits the assumption.

Owen did not intend that the education of the older children and the adults be neglected; although he agreed with Maclure that, having been too long exposed to the evils

of society, they were not as worthy of attention as were the very young. The night school provided education for the older pupils, all of whom at ten years of age became regular employees in the mills. Owen wanted these older children to remain full time pupils until they were twelve, but parental pressure forced him to fix at ten the age requirement for mill workers. (In most factories at the time, many were employed at the age of nine or younger, and there was no provision for education of any sort). The night school children learned to read and write, and the girls to knit, sew and cook; and all received religious instruction, a condition insisted on by Owen's partners. Along with these elementary studies came instruction, by lecture, discussion, and illustration, in natural history, geography, chemistry, ancient and modern history, singing, dancing, marching, and moral lectures on elementary social and economic facts. Of all of these, the teaching of religion went down least easily with Owen. He was willing, like Neef and Pestalozzi, to inculcate in the young "those practical moral principles which religion enjoins." But he, too, balked at "the consideration of any abstruse doctrines," arguing that they should be "reserved for an age when the pupils shall be better fitted to judge for themselves." He frankly admitted that the scriptures were read and the catechism regularly taught not because he deemed this "the proper method of conveying religious instruction

to the minds of young children, but because the parents were believed to wish it."¹²

It was Owen's plan to deal with adults in much the same fashion as he did with children. He stated:

It has been and ever will be found far more easy to lead mankind to virtue, or to rational conduct, by providing them with well regulated, innocent amusements and recreations, than by forcing them to submit to useless restraints. . . .¹³

Therefore, for the adult members of the community lectures were offered three nights a week; dancing was scheduled on three alternate nights. The lectures were to be, said Owen,

. . . familiar discourses, delivered in plain impressive language, to instruct the adult part of the community in the most useful practical parts of knowledge in which they are deficient, particularly in: the proper method of training their children to be rational creatures; how to expend the earnings of their own labour to advantage; and how to appropriate the surplus gains which will be left to them, in order to create a fund which will relieve them from the anxious fear of future want.

In short, these lectures may be made to convey, in amusing and agreeable manner, highly valuable and substantial information to those who are now the most ignorant in the community.¹⁴

Owen cannot be faulted for failing to put his precepts into practice. Both in his school and in his own home corporal punishment was non-existent; there was no punishment,

¹²Owen on Education, pp. 161-62.

¹³Owen, New View, p. 89.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 102-03.

but also no praise. He took great pains to win the confidence and affection of all the children, being constantly in the New Institution during the first few months of its existence. According to him, he not only "acquired the most sincere affections of all the children," but "also the hearts of all their parents, who were highly delighted with the improved conduct, extraordinary progress, and continually increasing happiness of their children. . . ." ¹⁵

New Lanark's "great attraction," asserted Owen, both for himself and "the numerous strangers who now continually visited the establishment, was the new infant school." From its opening, Owen insisted that he "daily watched and superintended" its operation until he "could prepare the minds" of the teachers he had personally selected for this "most important charge." The choice of such malleable instructors was not easy. Experience had convinced Owen that "it was in vain to look to any old teachers" whose only ideas of education were fixed in a traditional pattern, and who could not endure a school that did not emphasize authoritarianism. He freely acknowledged having "to seek among the population for two persons who had a great love for and unlimited patience with infants, and who were thoroughly tractable and willing unreservedly to follow my instructions." His choice finally fell upon one James Buchanan, whom he condescendingly des-

¹⁵ Owen on Education, p. 63.

cribed as "a poor simple-hearted weaver, . . . who had been previously trained by his wife to perfect submission to her will." It was, Owen frankly admitted, Buchanan's "willingness to be instructed," as well as his love of children and "inexhaustible patience" with them that won him the job. To assist Buchanan, Owen recruited from among the girls employed in the cotton mills a young woman of seventeen named Molly Young. Molly, in addition to sharing Buchanan's necessary qualifications of tractability and patience, was judged by Owen to have the advantage over her older teaching colleague "in natural powers of mind."¹⁶

Owen's first instruction to his two pliant instruments of educational reform, "readily received . . . and faithfully adhered to," was to never on any provocation use harsh words or actions. Furthermore, while showing in themselves an example of uniform kindness, they were to endeavor by every means in their power to inculcate a like spirit of loving kindness in the children in all their dealings with each other.¹⁷

Obviously, Owen shared with many educational reformers of his day the opinion that intellectual attainments were no advantage--if not a positive hindrance--to teachers.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 63-64.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 64-65.

Equally obvious, despite the levelling nature of many of his ideas, is the paternalistic cast in which they were molded. Again this was typical of the times. As one historian of Enlightenment philanthropy has noted of that period: "Even the most devoted and self-sacrificing of those who served the poor never dealt with them on terms of equality, nor did it occur to them to do so."¹⁸

Paternalist though he always was to be, Owen was still light-years away from typical employers of the time, who, along with many physicians, were ready to testify publicly as to the beneficial effects on eight and nine year olds of long hours of factory work. No wonder the social experiment at New Lanark caught the attention of the public, especially the prominent. By general testimony the town had become, in a little over a decade, the soberest, most moral village in Scotland. Owen was able to boast that "an idle individual, one in liquor, or a thief, is scarcely to be seen from the beginning to the end of the year."¹⁹ What was even more impressive was the fact that the entire operation was very substantially in the black. Owen was known to the world as a highly successful manufacturer who had done much to improve the processes

¹⁸David Owen, English Philanthropy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 104.

¹⁹Podmore, I, 95, 168, 244.

of fine-cotton spinning, a hard-headed, but impeccably honest man of business, who had for years operated large industrial concerns at enormous profit. His conspicuous goodwill to all mankind and his splendid business record spoke for him; and he probably did not greatly exaggerate the case when he said of himself, that at this time he was "by far the most popular individual in the civilized world."²⁰

Everyone who was interested in education or social reform came to New Lanark to see the great social experiment there in process, for Owen did not hesitate to invite the world to come and see what he had done. Over a ten year period an estimated twenty thousand recorded their names in the "Visitors Book." Most went away impressed with the genial, yet purposeful atmosphere that prevailed. Maclure, of course, was among their number; and he, as was previously noted, immensely liked what he saw. The pronounced emphasis Owen placed on the practical; his insistence on the removal of children from the pernicious influence of their parents; the fact that, while he wanted children to learn to speak and read correctly, he was not in the least interested in the development of esthetic sensibilities; his rejection of authoritarianism in teaching as well as rewards and punishments; the watering down of religious teaching to the most

²⁰ R. Owen, Life, I, 222.

innocuous level short of abandoning it altogether: all these factors, from Maclure's point of view, pointed to Owen as an educator of worth. Had not Owen, though never much for acknowledging intellectual debts, admitted that he found Pestalozzi's school a step in advance of ordinary schools; and was not at least some of the teaching method utilized at New Lanark shot through with the influence of Pestalozzi?²¹ True, Owen had criticized Pestalozzi; but it was criticism for not teaching the children anything of utility, anything to help them earn a living--and, of course, Maclure would have been the first to agree that this sort of training was absolutely essential in a sensible education.

Yet in one respect, Owen differed in a very basic way from Maclure--a difference that was eventually to rot the roots of all cooperative effort between the two. Having none of Owen's faith in the eventual reformation of the unper class, Maclure saw social reform as a very gradual thing, the evolutionary end product of a sensible method of education. For him, grandiose ends of a revolutionary nature were too remote for immediate concern--but means were vital. Therefore, reforms should be limited in scope, and carefully introduced. Owen, on the other hand, even while still at New Lanark, had gradually developed a panoramic and millennial vision of reform. True, he continued to

²¹Owen on Education, p. 155.

manifest an interest in the schools, and never tired of alluding to the essential foundation education must supply in order for the good society to exist. But he was, unlike Maclure, not essentially concerned with the mere mechanics of learning. All subjects, even play, were always just means to an end--as was education itself. That end was to make the children good members of the good community. Thus Owen's desire to work at community building, or even civilization building, far more than his thought about education's contribution to the formation of character, was the driving force that impelled him to unceasing effort to constantly widen the sphere of his influence. Then, too, as word of his notions for social reconstruction spread, as he found himself lionized by the general public and taken up by the socially prominent and influential, his vision expanded apace. Publicity was apparently a heady wine for the cotton magnate, whose extraordinary success in the regeneration of the miniature society over which he exercised proprietorship not only confirmed and hardened his opinion that man was solely the creature of circumstance, but also convinced him that he must drastically enlarge the scope of his reforms. More and more he put forward his theories with the uncompromising directness of a child, and with more than a child's self-confidence. He became capable of such statements as the following:

I know that society may be formed so as to exist without crime, without poverty, with health greatly improved, with little, if any, misery, and with intelligence and happiness increased a hundredfold; and no obstacle whatsoever intervenes at this moment, except ignorance, to prevent such a state of society from becoming universal.²²

Of his theories on reconstructing society he claimed:

The principles and plan are even now so fixed and permanent, that hereafter the combined power of the world will be found utterly incompetent to extract them from the public mind. Silence will not retard their course, and opposition will give increased celerity to their movements.²³

John F. C. Harrison, Owen's most recent biographer, has noted that belief in millennial solutions were quite popular at the time, and that the ideology of millennialism that was emerging from a variety of movements had certain basic characteristics. It was primarily an ideology of change, change that was not only imminent, but would be sudden, sweeping, and irrevocable--not mere reform from within the system, but an utter rejection and replacement of it by the perfect society. This impending change was to be made known by a prophet, or even the messiah himself; but, unlike typical religious dogma, millennialist thought called for the change to take place right here on earth and be enjoyed collectively by those who were saved. Best of

²²Podmore, I, 130.

²³Ibid., I, 226-27.

all, progress was virtually limitless, for human nature was to be transformed.²⁴

The typical millenarian, since he was concerned almost entirely with the near future, tended to be unshakably optimistic, dogmatic and historical. Owen clearly came to fit the picture on all counts, including the casting of himself in a messianic role, not only because of what he was saying, but the manner in which he expressed himself. For example: early in 1825, speaking in Washington, D. C. before both Houses of Congress, with the President and the President Elect in attendance, he told his audience that he had come to America to introduce a new social system. "The time is now come," he pontificated, "when the principle of good is about to predominate and reign triumphant over the principle of evil. . . . Old things shall pass away and all shall become new."²⁵ And later at New Harmony he spoke to the New Harmonists in exalted terms indeed, saying:

The day of your deliverance is come, and let us join heart and hand in extending that deliverance, first to those who are near, then to those who are more and more remote, until it shall pass to all people; even unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Then will be the full

²⁴John F. C. Harrison, Quest for the New Moral World (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c. 1969), pp. 101-02, 106, 134. See also: Owen on Education, pp. 29-30.

²⁵Robert Owen, Two Discourses on a New System of Society: as delivered in the Hall of Representatives in the United States (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1815), p. 10.

time of that universal sabbath, or reign of happiness, which is about to commence here. . . .²⁶

The titles of some of his writings are equally revealing of Owen's millennial turn of mind: The Inauguration of the Millenium; The Millenium in Practice; Manifesto of Robert Owen, the Discoverer and Founder of the Rational System of Society, and of the Rational Religion, etc..

Owen claimed that he had, over approximately the first twenty years of his experiments at New Lanark, disciplined himself "to reflect much, to speak little, and to practice extensively." In all that period he did not, he insisted, "intrude one sentence upon the world." "I deemed it," he wrote, "a duty to make myself quite sure of the truth of all the principles upon which I acted, before I recommended them to others."²⁷ However, once convinced that these principles had enabled him "to proceed from one step of success to another" in the regeneration of his villagers, he certainly made up for lost time. From the year 1817 onward, he wrote and spoke in the most messianic terms, announcing each new venture as the commencement of the millenium.²⁸ Another characteristic of his later works

²⁶New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 45 (August 2, 1826), 359.

²⁷R. Owen, Two Discourses, p. 7.

²⁸Harrison, pp. 106, 132.

was the ever more dismal protrait he painted of what the population of New Lanark had been like before he came along; and of course the change he effected became in retrospect so miraculous that it was, he avowed, only "with difficulty" that visitors "admitted the evidence of their own senses." According to him,

They saw a population that had been indolent, dirty, imbecile, and demoralized, to a lamentable extent, who had become actively industrious, cleanly, temperate, and very generally moral, in all their proceedings. They saw the children of these people trained and educated, from two years of age and upwards, without individual reward or punishment, and they had never seen children who were their equals, in disposition, habits, manners, intelligence, and kind feelings, or who appeared to enjoy an equal degree of active happiness. Yet this population had been so changed by an unknown and uneducated individual, without fortune and friends, and in opposition to almost every conceivable obstacle that the prejudices derived from ages of ignorance, could unite.²⁹

In reality, the attention Owen increasingly sought for his model community came at the expense of concentration on perfecting methods. Owen chose to play publicity agent for the show, to advertise success before it was fully achieved. The schoolroom became a theater, the pupils performers; and this atmosphere of artificiality had to cast its shadow upon the validity of any observable results. Unfortunately, either Maclure's tour of New Lanark had been too superficial, or he had been too much dazzled by Owen's attentions and renowned courtesy to discern that Owen was

²⁹R. Owen, Two Discourses, p. 7.

already allowing his hyperactive social conscience to lead him into losing his perspective.

Then, too, it was at this time that Owen began to develop that inability to stay in one place and to concentrate on one task at a time that came to be the despair of his disciples and the undoing of all his later projects. He had ceased to be a man of business. He had evolved into a public figure; he had become a great propagandist intent on saving the world. New Lanark saw less and less of him. He still kept his position as manager and partner in the mills but carried on most of his business by correspondence. He was constantly addressing meetings, writing letters to public officials, and sending articles to newspapers. He sent, or delivered in person, his essays and printed material to every prominent person he could think of. These activities transported him far beyond the practical measures necessary to sustain the experiment at New Lanark.

Even with the British party of reform, Owen came to find little favor. They viewed his utopian plans with half contemptuous tolerance, when they did not actively oppose them. They accused him of espousing a benevolent, paternal despotism as the ideal form of leadership in his experimental society. His own words indicted him on this score, for he was on record as having expressed astonishment that anyone should imagine that he "wished to have the opinions of the ill-trained and uninformed on any of the measures

intended for their relief and amelioration." He was fully convinced, he added, that "on such subjects, until they shall be instructed in better habits, and made rationally intelligent, their advice can be of no value."³⁰

Owen was still far from being regarded as an absolute crank, but some said that his success at New Lanark had made him a lovable bore and a bit of an eccentric. Almost all said his ideas were impracticable. And his diversification of interests combined with his ever more frequent undiplomatic, dogmatic assertions on the touchy subjects of social remedies and religion were causing him to lose control of his one solid experiment, the reformation of New Lanark. His partners gradually came forward in opposition to practices he had once fervently embraced but now was too busy to fight for. His more informal type schoolmasters were replaced by men trained in Lancasterian principles; music and dancing were no longer to be taught as part of the curriculum; religious teaching was to be more explicit and more traditional; and all males upon attaining six years of age were to wear trousers or drawers, instead of the loose fitting tunic that had been yet another of his innovations.

Owen took scant notice of this backsliding. For by this time, 1824, his interest had extended far beyond

³⁰ Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Backwoods Utopias (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, c. 1950), p. 63.

New Lanark, even beyond Britain at large; he saw a world in need of the millenium, and himself as its messiah. Thus when he was contacted by Richard Flower, acting as an agent for George Rapp, about the possibility of his purchasing the pietistic Rappite community of Harmony, Indiana, he was immediately intrigued. At once, he made arrangements to visit America to view the property he well might buy.

As for Maclure, though he was soon to reveal himself as very uneasy about joining forces with Owen, apparently he had not scratched beneath the surface of the latter's side-show at New Lanark. Had he done so, he surely would have been even more alarmed at the thought of forming any sort of agreement with Owen than he was. For certainly the pace and much of the tone of millennial ideology were antithetical to Maclure's pragmatic nature.

VI

Recruitment

By virtue of Robert Owen's reputation alone, Madame Fretageot had been from the outset most favorably disposed toward him. On October 21, 1824, she wrote to Maclure describing her delight at hearing from a mutual friend that, during his widely publicized trip to America, Owen planned to visit her school. Nor did she neglect to get in a little spade work in behalf of Owen's projected utopia, reminding Maclure that he, too, had expressed himself favorably on Owen's "intention of buying a large tract of land to establish his plan on our side of the Atlantic;" and she added: "It will be a great benefit indeed for this country." Already, she must have had some faint idea of persuading Maclure to join forces with Owen, for she continued: "Truly my feelings are so much pleased, specially that I can act a little part in this great undertaking of human happiness." But, being careful not to allow her enthusiasm for this new knight-errant of reform to cause her to neglect her faithful patron, she ended her letter by assuring Maclure, "If you was by me in this moment that my pen runs on the paper to express that my tongue would better say, I should be crazy

for joy."¹

If in the abstract realm of ideas Owen had already enlisted Madame Fretageot's sympathies, in the flesh he proved positively irresistible. Landing in New York on November 4, 1824, he reached Philadelphia on the 19th and called on Madame Fretageot and other members of Maclure's coterie on the 21st. A week later, after he had left for Washington, she wrote to Maclure:

I have had the visit of Mr. Owen. When he entered in my house I took his hands saying; there is the man I desired so much to converse with! And you are, said he, the woman that I wish to see. . . . He gave me a kiss of friendship that I returned heartily. We talked about one hour and half, but we could not talk freely. I was surrounded by some visitors and our conversation was but on general subjects. He told me he will in his return have a private conversation with me.

You have no idea what pleasure I felt when I was talking by the side of a man whose actions and principles are so much in harmony with mine. When he said that children must be taken just when born in order to write in those blank paper but what is correct, I felt an encrease of desire to arrive at that periode of my life where as much by my economy and the help of some friends I shall be able to put in practice that project of taking little babies who will be absolutely mine. Next Spring I will be in company with those two me [n] for whom I have the greatest esteem; You and Him; I will enjoy their conversation. . . .²

On January 13, 1825, writing from Paris, Maclure answered Madame Fretageot's letter by expressing his satis-

¹"Education and Reform: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 311.

²Ibid., pp. 311-12.

faction that she had made Owen's acquaintance, and his delight that Owen planned to make the United States "his theatre of action."³ But Maclure as yet had no notion of combining forces with Owen. After all, experience had already taught him several hard lessons--and he had been attempting merely to introduce a new educational methodology, not usher in a brave new world. Besides, he had reservations concerning the United States as a site for sweeping reforms. He informed Madame Fretageot that he was not sure but what the upper class in England was more liberal than its American counterpart, and he feared that "the laborious or productive class are perhaps too ignorant on both sides of the Atlantic to form a right conception of their own real interest."⁴ He went on to caution that Owen's "plans go deep into the sureties both of church and state, and most probably will be violently opposed by the corrupt and hypocritic bands that live by the plunder of either. . . ." Thus, rather than as a possible partner, Maclure saw Owen as a "pioneer of reform," whose "immense mechanism will require so broad and commodious a road that our childish plans will follow him without being obstructed by half the prejudice, superstition and bigotry we should have to

³ Ibid., n. 312.

⁴ Ibid., n. 308.

fight unaided by him."⁵ He added:

Even partial success on the great scale of his undertaking . . . will facilitate every species of amelioration and place human happiness upon a broad, well paved road, on which human existence may run without fear of hindrance toward the height of perfection.
 . . .⁶

In the meantime, however, Owen had made up his mind that the site of Harmony, Indiana was well suited to serve as a showcase for his utopian reforms. He, like almost every other European of his day who entertained dreams of a new society, thought of it exclusively in terms of America. The Old World was a dead end. Even if authoritarian attitudes were to be eased, land and property values were too high to permit full scale experimentation. Harmony, on the other hand, could be purchased for about a quarter of what he had estimated the cost would be of an establishment of minimum size in the British Isles. Then, too, even before he had heard about Harmony, Owen had come to feel intolerably hampered by his business partners. These Quaker gentlemen, early in 1824, had gone too far when they interfered in his management of the New Lanark schools to the extent of forcing the dismissal of certain teachers, and modifying the curriculum to include bible reading and exclude all musical activities. Harmony was just the sort of settlement

⁵Ibid., p. 312.

⁶Ibid., p. 313.

in which his sweeping reforms could be worked out in freedom from such irritating meddling. The United States, with its lack of class rigidity, its acknowledgement of the worth of the common man, its relatively tolerant attitude toward utopian schemes, lured him on.

Everything Owen saw at Harmony only intensified his eagerness to test the proposition of resolving society into small, basically agrarian communities of common property. His son, Robert Dale Owen, noted that now his father's "one ruling desire was for a vast theatre on which to try his plans of social reform. Here was a village already built . . . in a country where thought was free, and where the people were unsophisticated."⁷

The Rappite community must have indeed seemed to Owen a golden mean between the primitive conditions of frontier wilderness and the debilitating environmental rigidities of urban society. For the village the Rappites had hewn out of the wilderness contained an impressive inventory. There were: threshing machines; large sheep stables; pigstys; log dwellings; distilleries; a brewery; a granary; brick kilns, manufacturing establishments; twenty thousand acres under cultivation; orchards of bearing fruit; nut trees; a good drainage system; an excellent

⁷Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way (London: Trubner & Co., 1874), p. 210.

wharf; and the Wabash River was navigable for most parts of the year. As one observer noted, "These good people have literally made the barren wilderness to smile with corn-fields, meadows, and gardens upon a most extensive scale. Their granaries, barns, factories, &c. are generally built in an exceedingly handsome and durable manner."⁸ And the surrounding landscape was almost equally impressive, with plenty of gently rolling pasture land adjacent to the village; the valley being ringed in turn by highlands stocked with timber. Though he felt that intellectually and socially the community had been a failure, Owen was greatly impressed by what the Rappites had accomplished in a material way. If, he reasoned, a group of pietistic German peasants under the authoritarian and arbitrary rule of George Rapp could do so well, there was no limit to what a community guided by his own enlightened and advanced and--to his mind at least--thoroughly tested ideas might achieve.

Thus the price of \$150,000.00 for not only the village, but 30,000 acres of surrounding territory was deemed eminently reasonable by an enthralled Owen. He readily accepted Rapp's answer to the question of why he

⁸William Hebart, "A Visit to the Colony of Harmony in Indiana," Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), p. 329.

had decided to move his community elsewhere--that since the Rappites "had completed a good town and cleared and well cultivated a large tract of land which they had found in a state of nature, . . . they had less now to do, and wanted a new situation to work upon."⁹

Whatever Rapp's reasons for selling--and, in addition to the one he gave Owen, they have been variously listed as: unhealthy climate; unpleasant relations with neighbors, stemming from Rappite anti-slavery doctrine; remoteness from business centers; currency troubles; and the lack of sympathetic German speaking state legislators in Indiana,¹⁰ --Owen quickly concluded the deal. On January 3, 1825 the final agreement for the purchase was made.

As Owen was obviously in earnest, he was now able to proselytize for adherents with great effectiveness. Adding to his power of persuasion was the fact that this initial visit of his to America was proving to be one long triumphal tour. His renown as a social reformer had preceded him. In an era when, as Ralph Waldo Emerson noted, just about every-

⁹"The Diaries of Donald Macdonald," ed. Caroline Dale Snedeker, Indiana Historical Society Publications, XIV, No. 2 (1942), 231.

¹⁰Karl J. Arndt, George Rapp's Harmony Society (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967), pp. 292-94. See also: "Diaries of Macdonald," p. 232.

one had "a draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket."¹¹ Owen was everywhere honored and listened to with respect. For he came armed with letters of introduction from influential Europeans to the members of the most exalted political and intellectual circles in the United States.

Realizing that there was a mother lode to be mined in Philadelphia, Owen hastened back there. He conferred again with Maclure's friends from the Academy of Natural Science--Thomas Say, Charles Alexandre Lesueur, Gerard Troost, and John Speakman--and before long they were discussing plans to transfer their scientific work to Owen's new community. Madame Fretageot, highly receptive from the beginning, quickly became the most ardent convert of all; and she had no trouble engendering enthusiasm in Phiquepal. Thus while Maclure had been busy in Paris making plans and gathering material for his educational and scientific projects in Philadelphia, his friends there were forming a much more ambitious plan for him--nothing less than the merger of all his educational and scientific enterprises with Owen's great social experiment in the West.

¹¹V. F. Calverton, Where Angels Dare to Tread (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., c. 1941), p. 13. See also: Lindsay Swift, Brook Farm (New York: Corinth Books, 1900), p. 11; and John F. C. Harrison, Quest for a New Moral World (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c. 1969), pp. 13, 41, 47, 54.

Madame Fretageot assumed the role of matchmaker between the two philanthropists. On February 11, 1825, she wrote to Maclure:

I have seen Mr. Owen since he has bought 27000 acres of land at Harmony in Indiana. There he will found a new colony on a plan which has made already a great many proselites. He wishes to see you, and expect that next April you will converse with him on the subject.

After all that I know concerning his plan I have no doubt you will change something in your intention about your school. I talked with him on the subject. He said that the more good means are reunited the more the effects are powerful, but when scattered they do little or no effect. We must, says he, work all at once on a spot where the difficulties are almost removed. Then it is only so that we are able to show what are the effects of a good education. He observed that I would devote 30 years of my life where I now am without being able to counter-balance the evils which surround my pupils. That reasoning is exact with my own observations; but I repeat I wait for your arrival before to fix my opinion.¹²

In the same letter, Madame went on to report that Phiquepal, who had arrived in America in the midst of all the excitement over Owen's visit, was none too happy. He had lined up ten or twelve children for his projected school, but as he, too, was much impressed by Owen's plans, he was reluctant to start something he might soon abandon. Madame agreed that there was little point in Phiquepal's starting up. She was sure that, were he on the scene, Maclure would not want to sponsor schools in Philadelphia when New Harmony beckoned. However, she assured Maclure, she would not presume

¹²Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 314.

to speak to Phiquepal on the subject; because, she, in the absence of her benefactor, was "not so much assured that my views or opinions were right." She felt, she informed Maclure, that his experience and judgment were needed. "The matter is of some importance," she told him, "and ought to engage you not to loose time."¹³

Nor were Phiquepal and Madame the only ones whose plans hinged on Maclure. "There is already a great many persons of this town," she went on, "making their preparations."

Several of them are your acquaintances Doctor Troost, Mr. Say, Mr. Speakman, great many others, who expect you will join them. If anything of that kind is to happen you may depend that I will not say no, for my part. In all cases I think you would do very well to gather as many persons you would judge able to be of some utility in either places and bring them with you. . . . And the best of all, come as quick as possible. It will never be to [o] soon when I will have the pleasure of seeing you. I would never end if I was to give a description of the pleasure that I expect. I can only say that I remain for ever your most affectionate

M D Fretageot¹⁴

Despite the deferential tone she took in her letters to Maclure, Madame must have been fairly confident that she knew how to handle him. In a letter to Owen, written only four days after the one to Maclure quoted above, she flatly assured him that "Mr. Maclure for whom I have the greatest

¹³Ibid., p. 315.

¹⁴Ibid.

esteem being informed by you and by me will join me in my opinion and I consider it would be a great acquisition."¹⁵

Owen left Philadelphia to re-visit Washington, but not before he had convinced himself that Maclure was the key figure in enlisting the services of the Philadelphians, as well as a possible partner of real substance, and therefore well worth cultivating. To this end he wrote to Madame Fretageot inviting Phiquepal to join him in Washington to help him compose a letter to Maclure. On February 18, 1825, she wrote to Maclure informing him of all this; then in the same letter she intensified her effort to recruit Maclure for the venture in the West:

In all cases you would do very well to look for some useful persons, as a man who should be much acquainted with Lithography, a good mechanician, a good Chimist, &c., in fact people who would be useful in the new empire of good sense, as it called by Mr. Owen. If, after being acquainted with all the advantages that are to be met in that new colony for the reform and consequently for the happiness of human race, you decide to join it; the collection would be at your disposal and every thing should be ready.

My friend, you cannot delay your departure. You are expected for the accomplishing of a great undertaking. You are expected by all your friends among whom I am not the least. Your presence will make a good effect. For my part I cannot express or cannot give a description of the pleasure that I will experience when I will have the happiness of seeing again the one that I have so much desired. . . .¹⁶

¹⁵ Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Backwoods Utopias (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, c. 1950), p. 155.

¹⁶ Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 315.

On March 13th, Madame again wrote to Maclure in the same vein:

I told you in my last that Phiquepal was going to Washington to meet with Mr. Owen. He has been much delighted with that excellent man; and is now convinced that you will join in his plan. Mr. Owen is coming next week to explain me every thing and concert with me on the means to put in execution. He will write to you, on the matter, after having explained me what are his intention. After what Phiquepal has heard at Washington it appears that every man of good sense support him with all their power; here at Philadelphia there is a great number of persons preparing for their departure. I don't mean that they are going immediately but are terminating their business in order to be ready next fall.

Mr. Owen is not arrived yet. I wait him with impatience. He sent me his speech at Washington, February 25th, which is a master piece of eloquence, and appears having made a powerful effect on the auditory. The more I know of that man, of his plan and of his high sense, the more I am convinced that we will join in his undertaking. Do come as soon as possible. Do not forget to gather . . . many people for the new colony. . . .¹⁷

The high points of Owen's American tour occurred on February 25th and March 7th, 1825, when he delivered speeches in the House of Representatives on a new system of society. So important a figure was he considered at the time that his audience included the members of both houses of Congress, the President, the President-Elect, and many other important officials. Using a six-foot square model of the village of the future to illustrate his lectures, Owen was taken quite seriously by both his audience and the newspapers. Little wonder that the Philadelphia Pestalozzians were impressed,

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 316.

when fresh from these triumphs, Owen called at their school on March 25th. Together they formulated a joint letter to Maclure. Owen composed the first page, Madame Fretageot the second and third, and Phiquepal finished the missive. Owen wrote:

My Dear Sir,

I am surrounded by your friends here & we have had much conversation respecting you & your charitable objects. The result of which is a great desire on the part of all of them to see you here & to have your direction in various important matters which they have before them. In this desire I also join & hope to see you here on my return from the western states in about two months hence, previous to my return to Europe. . . . In the meantime . . . [I] remain

Your affectionate friend
Robt. Owen¹⁸

In her section of the letter, Madame Fretageot went into some detail:

You see, my dear friend, that we have had the delightful pleasure of hearing the best man explaining a plan which is the best calculated for human happiness.

In my last I told you that I did not expect him from Washington on account of his numerous occupations. But you may judge how I was agreeably surprised when I received a letter from him announcing he would be amongst us the 25th and would like to stay 24 hours with us. . . . He came and the pleasure that I felt when he took me in his arms cannot be equalled only by the one I will experience when I will have the happiness of taking your hands in mine! It is necessary that I get some calm if I will be able to enter in the details that have remained my business to explain.

The first society will be founded on the following principles. Those who will be received the first shall be choosen amongst the best principled being, in order to form by their example those who afterwards will be received indiscriminately. The first settlers by their

¹⁸Ibid., p. 317.

. . . . industry will establish all that is proper. . . . Education is what will occupy the most, because from them depend the future prosperity not only of the community but of all. Those who will be witnesses of such happy result will of course be convinced that the present state of society is founded on such principles that it is quite impossible to be happy according its rules. This is but an imperfect sketch, but you'll be soon here; and no doubt remain in my mind that you'll join the plan as soon as you'll be informed of it as we are.¹⁹

The above passage is interesting, because it indicates that at one point Owen did contemplate some sort of screening process in the formation of the New Harmony population, an idea that was later abandoned--much to the detriment of the community's chances for survival.

Madame Fretageot went on to describe Owen and his plans in glowing terms--yet she was careful to again assuage any possible jealousy on Maclure's part by adding that "there would be no pleasure any where if you was not to participate of it."²⁰

Phiquepal, in somewhat less emotional terms, echoed Madame Fretageot's sentiments:

Dear Sir

You see by the letter of Madme. Fretageot and that of Mr. Owen that we have had the pleasure of spending some time with that excellent man. I do not think there is any body in the world better calculated to put into execution his plan; it is to say, to realize all that has been wished for by all the good and thinking men of

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

all ages and countries.

One thing only has been wanting to us these two days past; it is to have you with him. Come then as soon as you can. Mr. O. intends to be here at the end of May and spend a fortnight with us, with the expectation to meet you here. A great deal may be expected from that reunion for the happiness of mankind. Say and Lesueur do not seem less anxious for your arrival. Mr. O's benevolence seems to overcome . . . difficulties that were to be expected from the prejudices of all kind that are so numerous even on this part of the world. So powerfull is truth when uttered with kindness.

I remain very sincerely yours

Wm. S. Phiquepal²¹

Unfortunately none of Maclure's letters from Paris answering Madame Fretageot's and Phiquepal's entreaties that he combine forces with Owen have been preserved. Apparently his replies to the epistolatory bombardment to which he had been subjected were tantalizingly noncommittal. For on July 12, 1825, three days after Maclure had landed in New York, Madame Fretageot was still writing to him in the same vein. She wrote:

. . . Mr. Owen had advanced the progress of good sense more within these last six months than it would have been in hundred years with the common steps of progressive knowledge. I wish you had time enough to understand this plan, because I know you will recognise in it all the feelings that have engaged all your attention these 20 last years in favour of humankind. . . .

My desire in this is not to see you to agree with my opinion but to help me to investigate the subject fully. It suits me so perfectly that I am not only desirous to see its progress and its execution, but to add my exertions to those of this benevolent man. Then, my excellent friend, it is you who will direct me in all this. I said so to Mr. Owen. He knows that I am devoted to your opinion by the esteem that you have inspired me, and I may add that I have not such confidence in my wisdom as to engage myself in such thing without the advice

²¹Ibid., p. 319.

of my friend. But also you must expect that I will support my opinion with all the advantage that would give the possibility of knowing the plan more than you. It is why I engage Mr. Owen to stay with you so long as possible.²²

Maclure's answer to the above letter is broken into two parts and clearly reveals both his own cynical nature and the persuasive powers of Robert Owen. In the first section of his reply he was obviously trying to let Madame Fretageot down gently:

Your letter of the 12 July received. When the imagination is exalted so as to leave room only for one favorite Idea in the mind, it approaches insanity. All that Mr. Owen can possibly say about his plan cannot add one iota to the favorable opinion I have always had of the immense benefit that must accrue to humanity by the putting it into practice. But there is two things to be considered and coolly examined. The first is the reasonableness of the plan and the goodness and solidity of the theory, in which I perfectly agree with Mr. Owen and all his most enthousiastical supporters. The second is the most difficult to annalise as the means of putting in practise, because the materials he has to work upon are stubborn, crooked and too often bent in an opposite direction from their owne most evident interests.

At one time I had the vanity to suppose that individual exertion could possibly effect some little reformation in men. . . . Taking warning from the failure of the vast number who in every age have unsuccessfully attempted it, indolence prompted me to try the little means in my power on children. And not withstanding the immense diffusion of knowledge within the last 30 years, I'm still afraid that the education of the children must be the chief support and foundation of the system. And it's most probable that . . . both you and Phiquepal can be more usefully employed, both for yourselves and others, than joining Mr. O[wen] in the commencement of his most arduous undertaking.²³

²²Ibid., p. 320.

²³Ibid., p. 322.

But after Maclure completed the above section of his letter he saw Owen "for a few minutes." Although Owen was due to embark for England the following day and did not have much time to spare, he arranged to call on Maclure that evening for "more conversation." The result was a tribute to Owen's power of persuasion, for as Maclure picked up his pen once more, it was to hedge on his rejection of forming any sort of association with Owen:

I'm highly delighted, and as much astonish, at his success. The revolution in the public mind must be beyond the most enthusiastic conception. Every one that he has met approves of his plans and even the priests seems to him to favor them. I hope it will be realized and have no doubt that much will be accomplished for the good of mankind.²⁴

Toward the end of this same letter, Maclure's skepticism again reasserted itself, yet his concluding words certainly did not rule out the possibility of cooperation with Owen:

. . . Make money has been the only subject of most I have met with since I landed. Wild speculations and golden dreams entirely occupies the upper stories of most of the Bipedes. If I was to take the nation from the sample I have seen, I should be apt to think Mr. O[wen] had taken silence for consent, when it was only indifference bordering on contempt. . . .

I shall embark with your two nephews and my servant tommorrow morning in the steamboat for Phila[delphi]a, and shall arrive in the Evening. And in spite of the mania I see here, am much gratified by the general improvement in Society, and think Mr. O[wen] may advance more rapidly than I had expected, but still the experi-

²⁴Ibid., pp. 322-23.

ment is to be tryed. But we shall talk more about it.
I remain your sincerely

Wm. Maclure²⁵

Having left the matter open to future discussion, and then having placed himself in the midst of his entranced and enthusiastic friends in Philadelphia, the only surprising thing is that Maclure held out as long as he did. The debate apparently went on throughout the summer. Maclure reached Philadelphia in mid-July, but as late as mid-November he had not given in. Owen himself apparently tipped the scales. He returned to New York from Great Britain on November 6, 1825, more confident and ebullient than ever. By November 11 he was in Philadelphia, staying only until the fourteenth; but he was back again on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth. During each of these two visits he and his party conferred with Maclure, Madame Fretageot, Say, and Phiquepal. The end result of these conferences was all the most ardent Owenite could have asked of Maclure. Not only did he agree to underwrite a very substantial portion of the expenses involved, his commitment also insured for the project the services of a truly distinguished group of scientists for teaching and research, among them Thomas Say, Charles Alexander Lesueur, Gerard Troost, and C. S. Rafinesque. In addition, Maclure's

²⁵Ibid., p. 323.

presence meant that Madame Fretageot and Monsieur Phiquepal would join the community; and he subsequently recruited his favorite Pestalozzian, Joseph Neef. Finally, he forwarded to New Harmony his extensive private library and his large collection of natural specimens.

Studies of the New Harmony experiment have tended to minimize Maclure's importance in the matter of rounding up those scientists and scholars who made the little frontier community an absolute unique intellectual outpost. Some authors have gone so far as to credit their presence solely to Owen's influence.²⁶ This was hardly the case. Madame Fretageot's letters clearly indicate the pivotal nature of Maclure's participation in Owen's scheme. Whatever their predilections, neither she nor Phiquepal were likely to have become communitarians against the wishes of their patron. Neef's recruitment was solely Maclure's doing. As for the scientists, the concept of New Harmony as "the focus of enlightened atheism" undoubtedly made the thought of living there attractive to some of them at a time when science and religion were considered irreconcilable.²⁷ But here again Maclure's presence must

²⁶ Brian Simon, Studies in the History of Education (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960), p. 196. See also: Calverton, p. 184.

²⁷ George B. Lockwood, The New Harmony Movement (New York: D. Appleton, 1905), p. 83.

have counted for more. Certainly this is true in the case of Say and Lesueur. Both men were long time friends of Maclure, as well as scientific colleagues, and both had been recipients of his generosity. Neither man was overly anxious to go, and they did so more out of a sense of duty to their patron than any real desire to share in the experiment.²⁸ Troost and Rafinesque were not as close to Maclure, but they knew him far better than they did Owen, and the confluence of so many fellow-scientists probably had more to do with their joining the community than did Owen's visionary doctrines.

Owen, Madame Fretageot, Phiquepal: each had buttressed the other's arguments, all had worked on Maclure; and barring the personal nature of their appeals, it was very unlikely that he would have thought of joining forces with Owen. Yet the two men were in complete agreement on many things, not only in the field of education, but in the political sphere as well. To what extent these areas of agreement played a part in Maclure's decision is impossible to calculate. But since he and Owen were about to commence

²⁸ Caroline Dale Snedeker, The Town of the Fearless (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1931), p. 229. See also: Harry B. Weiss and Grace M. Ziegler, Thomas Say (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1931), p. 148; and Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 296.

a relationship of which these ideas formed the frame, they are enumerated below.

In their political philosophies both men had remarkably similar visions. They were one-worlders, and their concept of this world included loosely federated villages of no more than a couple of thousand people. In these primarily agrarian villages universal suffrage would prevail and cooperation would replace competition. There would of necessity be some trading done with other villages, even other civilizations, but each village would be virtually self-sustaining--as would be each of its adult inhabitants; an eminently practical education for every citizen male and female would see to this. Not only the ruling class but professional classes as well would be conspicuous only by their complete absence. Furthermore, both men believed that utopian examples of such villages must be provided to show mankind what was truly in its own best interest.

Arthur E. Bestor Jr. has noted the close affinity that existed in the early nineteenth century between educational and communitarian reformers.²⁹ Maclure and Owen exemplified this tendency. Both came to see the school as more than a mere reflector of change--it was to be the primary instrument by which necessary and desirable alter-

²⁹Bestor, Backwoods Utopias, p. 134.

ations in society's fabric were to be made. Given such an educational philosophy, the move from the small arena of educational reform to the larger one of the regeneration of society as a whole was natural enough. True, Maclure was always much more reticent than Owen about expanding his reforming efforts beyond the classroom, but it was always more a matter of proper timing than of basic convictions; for he, too, insisted that, in the end society itself must be drastically reformed.

In addition to their agreement as to education's crucial role in the reformation of society, Maclure and Owen shared the following educational values:

- (1) They kept in touch with new methods by first hand observations of experimental schools;
- (2) They loved to experiment;
- (3) They were willing to spend generously to support the schools necessary to test their educational theories;
- (4) They had faith in the objective method, and a corresponding disdain for classical studies;
- (5) They agreed that practical education was vital to relieve the plight of the downtrodden workers;
- (6) They had faith in education's power to shape young minds;
- (7) They believed that infants should be removed from the pernicious influence of their parents and placed in wholesome boarding schools;

(8) They believed that method is as important as ends;

(9) They believed that pupils' inclinations offered the best guide to what should be taught;

(10) They believed that teachers cannot teach efficiently through fear;

(11) They agreed that dogmatic, sectarian education had no place in the schools;

(12) They agreed on the need for a program of adult education;

(13) They agreed that the education of girls deserved the same direction and support as did that of boys.

With so many ideas in common it might have been expected that the two philanthropists could have worked together toward their agreed upon goals. Nor was Maclure anxious to share the limelight with Owen. At the outset he was perfectly content to have Owen assume responsibility for all phases of the communal experiment--except in the area of education. In that sphere Maclure was to have full sway; in exchange for which he agreed to accept up to ten thousand dollars worth of liability for expenses involved in the establishment of the utopian community. Nothing so clearly illustrates the fundamental differences between the two partners as this initial arrangement. Owen had obviously come a long way from the days at New Lanark when he was daily in the schools, intensely interested in every aspect

of what was being taught, and by whom. He now considered education as but a single aspect of necessary reform, unimportant enough in the total picture to be turned over completely to someone else. Maclure, on the other hand, by insisting on control of the educational program at New Harmony, and by limiting his financial responsibility, made plain his abiding faith in education as the key to human progress, as well as his uneasiness about expanding the scope of utopian reform.

VII

The Boatload of Knowledge

Once Maclure's period of indecision was at an end he wasted no time. Proceeding by wagon and coach across the Alleghanies, he and Owen, with their band of more than thirty committed followers in tow, were in Pittsburgh by December 8, 1825. Finding the Ohio River too low for steamboats to run, a keelboat was purchased and fitted up. It was about eighty feet long, flatbottomed, with a cabin that ran almost its entire length. It had no power, but floated down river with the current at the rate of about two or three miles an hour. Attached to its stern was a monstrous sweep, which was used as a rudder. Loose sweeps, fifteen feet in length, lay on the deck on either side of the cabin; these were used to avoid snags, rapids, and whirlpools.

The long, roomy cabin was rebuilt with four compartments, one each for the crew, the men, the ladies, and the children. In addition there was a well-appointed kitchen, with a long dining table and an open fireplace built of stones. Owen named the vessel "The Philanthropist," but bystanders were quick to dub it "The Boatload of Knowledge." In the same spirit the gentlemen passengers gallantly

christened the ladies' quarters "Paradise," and Lesueur labelled the children's apartment at the stern "Purgatoire." Finally, a long, narrow pennant was affixed to the boat's masthead, reading "Philanthropist" on one side and "Harmony" on the other.

Maclure loaded some of his "Philosophical Collection" on the Philanthropist. However, he sent the bulkiest part--five tons of geological specimens, pictures, globes, maps, and books--by ship to New Orleans, and from there up river to New Harmony.

Room was made for Madame Fretageot's piano. She was anxious that it be placed carefully in the hold, but Robert Dale Owen urged her to have it put in the cabin for the travelers' use. "But the voyage is so short," she objected. "Short if the piano be opened, yes; otherwise it will be tiresomely long," was Robert Dale's winning reply.¹ Considering the eventual length of the trip, it was fortunate for the passengers that Robert Dale's persuasive power in this instance matched that of his father.

The crew of ten, described by one traveler as "that half-bone, half-alligator gentry," looked on their thirty-five or so passengers with amused tolerance. One of the

¹ Caroline Dale Snedeker, The Town of the Fearless (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1931), p. 233.

crew prophetically noted that the weather made it "a durn fool time to be startin' down river."² But with the voyagers so anxious to put the millenium into effect, such a mundane problem as the weather received scant consideration. No sooner had the mooring lines been untied than the cold temperature and bitter wind quickly forced the passengers into the cabin. Inside there was no consciousness of motion, but the combination of lively minds full of high hopes and Madame Fretageot's piano must have made time fly. However, due to the strong winds and the loose ice floating in the river at night, the captain was fearful of allowing the keelboat to drift. It was brought into shore. Next morning it was found to be lodged in an eddy of ice, unable to be moved in any direction.

So high was morale that only Phiquepal took things badly enough to curse. Owen, and later Maclure, chose a more practical course. Owen, accompanied for a fellow-passenger named Mrs. Fisher, immediately left the marooned craft and headed back to Pittsburgh, a seven mile walk through the forest to get to the stage. He explained that he was anxious to get to New Harmony as soon as possible. (Whether Mrs. Fisher offered any explanation for her departure is not known).

²Ibid., p. 235.

Maclure stayed on a bit longer, spending several evenings in conversation at the kitchen table, telling an appreciative audience about his geological escapades. Nor was he the only contributor. Say explained Indian customs and described colorful sights he had seen in his travels; and Lesueur was able to go them one better by illustrating his descriptions and adventures with pictures. Then, when dinner was over, the table was pushed aside for dancing to the piano, or Robert Dale recited Byron, or everyone sang old favorites and newly composed communitarian hymns. But all this must have soon proved too confining for Maclure. He, too, decided to disembark and travel part way by land. Nor did he, any more than Owen had, proceed alone. Madame Fretageot went with him, thereby adding to the long existing speculation concerning the pair.

Thomas Say was left in charge. He was a somewhat improbable choice, for he was of the strong, silent variety, who found administrative tasks onerous, and took them on only from a sense of duty. But he was respected and well liked, and apparently experienced no difficulties. In fact, despite their having been temporarily deserted by their two philanthropic leaders, the rest of the passengers regarded the three week ice-locked delay in the woods as a pleasant interlude. Not even the nightly howl of wolves and wind could dampen their spirits, for the cabin was snug and warm, being heated by two large wood stoves as well as the stone

fireplace. Each day the younger set climbed out of the boat and skated on the ice. The ladies found enough to do cooking and caring for the children on board. Say and Lesueur were able to enjoy themselves since they had an adjacent forest to explore. Fish and game abounded, so those men who did not care to indulge in scientific investigations spent their time fishing and hunting. Robert Dale Owen later remembered the ice-bound idyll as the happiest time of his life.

On the morning of January 9, 1826, a booming sound awoke the passengers. The crew shouted to them that the ice was beginning to break. All day the male members of the party assisted the crew in hacking a channel out through the ice to where the river was clear. Once on its way again, the Philanthropist proceeded at a leisurely pace. At night, as was the custom with keelboats, if the wind was strong, it was brought into shore and secured; but if the weather was calm and the current not too swift, it was allowed to drift downstream, its cars unmanned. During the day the men found the rowing good exercise; and for the ladies and the men off duty, the hilly, rocky, wooded banks that glided by were a constant source of interest. Then, too, there were occasional waves of greeting from dwellers in the various homesites that dotted the shores.

As an antidote to the close confinement aboard the Philanthropist, there were frequent stops for visits in the

towns and even the houses along the route. Whenever the boat came into the bank, settlers replenished its larder with milk, eggs, poultry, and fruit; and each day the hunters went ashore in the skiff and came back with fresh game. The ladies saw to it that warm and ample meals were served, and there was fresh bread daily. In the evenings there was good conversation. Some read, others watched the naturalists stuff and mount birds the hunters had killed during their daily forays. On those rare nights when the weather was mild enough and the moon was up, everyone went out on deck to sing.

At Steubenville a judge came on board with his ten year old son, whom he wished enrolled in the Pestalozzian school at New Harmony. He paid an advance of twenty-five dollars for the first quarter of the term, which must have seemed a good portent. Perhaps Maclure and Madame Fretageot had recruited the boy, for the judge informed the voyagers that the two had stopped there on their way to Wheeling.

At Wheeling Maclure and Madame Fretageot rejoined the group. Owen, however, had left only a note and some of his baggage to be put on board, and, still in the company of Mrs. Fisher, had set off a fortnight before in the mail stage. The pace of the voyage continued as before, five or so miles per hour, when the sweeps were manned, and about two miles an hour when the boat was allowed to drift with the current. At another stop, made because of unfavorable

winds, it was decided to visit a large farm. There "three lively females" were encountered. The damsels were invited to sup on board, and were so pleased by the passengers that they were on the verge of being persuaded to join the party. But their mother said she couldn't spare them on such sudden notice. The old lady did, however, talk of a summer excursion to see how things were going at New Harmony.³

Thus the expedition continued down the river "in high health & spirits" for the nine days it took to travel the six hundred miles from Pittsburgh to Cincinnati. On the last day large chunks of floating ice overtook the craft, and it required the united efforts of passengers and crew at the sweeps to make the bank of the river and avoid being carried past Cincinnati. There the party went its several ways, some visiting friends, others sightseeing and making little purchases. Maclure and a few others took the opportunity to meet with a Mr. Symmes, author of a new theory on the shape of the earth. According to one witness it was an hour wasted, as Mr. Symmes' remarks "were desultory and common place, & delivered in a faltering manner without clearness or connection."⁴

³"The Diaries of Donald Macdonald," ed. Caroline Dale Snedeker, Indiana Historical Society Publications, XIV, No. 2 (1942), 335.

⁴Ibid., pp. 335-36.

Early the next morning, the ice having flowed past, the trip was resumed, and by the evening of the following day the Philanthropist reached Louisville. There Maclure met with Neef, to whom he had written, asking him to meet the keelboat. Neef, overjoyed at the chance to return to teaching, informed his patron that he was arranging to sell his farm and remove to Harmony in the spring. The keelboat captain secured the services of a pilot whose assistance was vital in crossing "the Falls," a two mile stretch in which there was just enough water to make the descent safe. The feat was accomplished "in fine style"⁵ but, according to Lesueur, "not without some emotion, tossed about in the frothy rapids."⁶

Now nearing the end of the journey, one of the men on board, a Mr. Smith, was sent ahead to New Harmony for wagons to be at Mount Vernon to meet the boat on Sunday, January 22nd, 1826. Strong winds, however, kept it from docking there until Monday, the 23rd. The wagons were waiting to take the party overland the final fourteen miles to New Harmony. But a snow storm again caused a change in plans. It was decided to wait for a break in the weather, and then send the ladies, children, and some of the men in

⁵Ibid., p. 336.

⁶Snedeker, Town of Fearless, p. 240.

the keelboat, while the rest of the men accompanied the wagons. Robert Dale Owen found the thought of yet another delay intolerable; he procured a horse and rode off to New Harmony that evening. Early the following morning the wagons were loaded and half the party started for New Harmony. The river had frozen, so those making the final part of the trip on the Philanthropist were forced to wait two more days. Then they came around and up the Wabash, stopping at Shawneetown to take on board the heavy baggage, much of it Maclure's paraphernalia, shipped there from New Orleans.

The people of New Harmony had been eagerly anticipating the presence of the scholars. Robert Owen had arrived more than a week earlier. He had gone at once to the Great Hall, where the whole town flocked to hear him announce the impending arrival of "a boat which contains more learning than was ever contained in any boat."⁷ Thus the expedition was received with open arms by the populace. On the evening of the Philanthropist's docking there was a huge banquet of welcome. The main course--wild turkey--had been the chief item on the travelers' diet during their six week journey; but in their excitement at having finally arrived at their destination, no one was reported as irritated by this dietary redundancy.

⁷ Ibid., p. 243.

VIII

The Preliminary Society

Some of those on hand to greet the scholars viewed their arrival with mixed emotions. One was none other than Robert Owen's son, William, who had accompanied his father when almost a year earlier he had come to purchase the town. William, though only twenty-three years old, had been left there in charge of his father's interests while the latter had gone off to beat the drum for his latest and greatest project.

These interests were considerable. People as well as physical property were involved. Even as the Rappites had prepared to make their formal exodus from the town, newcomers had begun flocking to the village. For Robert Owen never really gave serious consideration to the idea of emulating the Rappites, who had turned away prospective settlers not of their particular sect. On the contrary, he had sought wide publicity for his open invitation to "the industrious and well disposed of all nations" to become members of his "new Establishment."¹ Newspapers

¹Robert Owen, "Notice to Farmers, Tradesmen and Others: February 1, 1825" (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

everywhere had printed his "Notice to Farmers, Tradesmen and Others" dated February 1, 1825. It had assured prospective communitarians:

As long as they shall lead a sober, peaceable and industrious life, and be willing to be directed in their labor, as the wants of the Community may require, Good Habitations, The Most Wholesome Food, The Most Useful Clothing, The Best Attention During Sickness, And A Superior Education For Their Children will be secured to them; together with increased comforts and advantages in proportion to the increased prosperity of the Society.²

Although the notice went on to add that "only respectable persons, steady families and good workmen need apply,"³ no references were to be required, and no screening process was to be employed.

Thus in actuality, long before the boatload of scholars arrived on the scene, the selectivity which Madame Fretageot had assured Maclure that Owen planned to exercise in the matter of the community's earliest settlers was conspicuous only by virtue of its total absence. Did Madame Fretageot misunderstand Owen? Or had he perhaps, in his eagerness to see the Philadelphia Pestalozzians in the fold, given them to understand that they were the chosen people, the sterling examples who would give the experiment direction as well as serve as models for future settlers to emulate? The question can

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

never be answered, but it is an interesting one, because Owen's open door policy later came to be looked back upon by many, including Maclure, as the major flaw in the experiment.⁴ Even Owen's son, Richard, later noted:

From all sides, men, women and children poured in, some enthusiastic, but often visionary, others having a considerable fund of information, but little practical business knowledge, not a few drones, and unfortunately, several smart sharpeners.⁵

Such criticism disregarded Owen's basic point, which was, as one observer realized, that since he had succeeded so famously with the dregs of society at New Lanark, he cared not how degraded, vicious or ignorant his new colonists might be, for he felt the power of his system to be such, that they could soon be rendered virtuous and educated.⁶ Robert Dale Owen also grasped what his father was

⁴"Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 377. See also: "New Harmony--an Adventure in Happiness: Papers of Thomas and Sarah Pears," ed. Thomas Clinton Pears, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XI, No. 1 (1933), 27; and Karl Bernhard, "Travels Through North America, During the Years 1825 and 1826," Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), p. 420.

⁵Richard Owen, Brief History of the Social Experiment at New Harmony, Indiana (An original manuscript in the Albert C. Porter collection. Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana), p. 4.

⁶Margaret Bayard Smith, The First Forty Years of Washington Society, ed. Gaillard Hunt. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 196.

about, but--in retrospect, of course--he, too, deemed him guilty of poor judgment on several counts. Although when the elder Owen had first indicated that he might purchase New Harmony, Robert Dale had urged him to do so, he eventually came to believe that his father had erred badly in choosing the United States as the scene of his establishment. For one thing, Robert Dale reasoned, workers in England were in far more need than those in America, and thus far more likely to try to make such an experiment work. Then, too, he came to believe that his father's faith in proper environment and "the instinct of self-interest to reform all men, however ignorant or vicious," betrayed him.⁷ Admitting to the village "all comers" was not facing merely a normal challenge. For, wrote Robert Dale, expanding on his brother Richard's remarks:

It is in the nature of any novel experiment, or any putting forth of new views which may tend to revolutionize the opinions or habits of Society, to attract to itself . . . waifs and strays from surrounding society; men and women of crude, ill-considered, extravagant notions, nay, worse, vagrants who regard the latest heresy but as a stalking-horse for pecuniary gain, or a convenient cloak for immoral behavior.⁸

Such recriminations, however, were far in the future

⁷Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way (London: Trubner & Co., 1874), p. 228.

⁸Ibid.

when on April 27, 1825, Robert Owen had addressed the growing community, as well as interested spectators from the surrounding countryside. The meeting took place in the old Rappite church, which had been re-christened by him the "Hall of New Harmony." Although the hall could easily seat a thousand people, this day it was filled completely with eager listeners. He had, he told the enthralled gathering, "come to this country to introduce an entire new state of society; to change it from an ignorant, selfish system to an enlightened social system, which shall gradually unite all interests into one, and remove all cause for contest between individuals." So long as "the individual system" were to continue to prevail, he informed the crowd, "the great mass of mankind must remain . . . ignorant, poor, oppressed, and consequently, vicious, and miserable," with no hope for the melioration of mankind's warped character "until the individual system shall be entirely abandoned."⁹

Owen made it clear that there could be no exception to the acceptances by his listeners of their duty to help "produce good instead of evil, and happiness instead of misery." This they would accomplish by the "obvious and easy . . . practice" of working to affect the "change from the individual to the social system; from single families

⁹New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 1 (October 1, 1825), 1.

with separate interests to communities of many families with one interest." He cautioned, however, that such a momentous change could not be achieved at once. Only after a group of right-thinking people had become "long acquainted with each other," when their "habits, condition and sentiments" had become similar, would they be capable of successfully operating a smooth-running communitarian establishment. In the meantime it would be necessary that some "intermediate measures" be adopted "to enable all parties, with the least inconvenience, to change their individual, selfish habits and to acquire the superior habits" requisite of those who would live the communal life. He admitted that "many difficulties must be at first encountered, and many struggles made with our old feelings while the work of regeneration shall be going forward." But "these contests with . . . old habits and feelings" would, he had assured everyone, "be of short duration." Those in the audience who planned to become community members were urged to think of themselves as residing in

. . . a halfway house on this new journey from poverty to wealth; from ignorance to intelligence; from anxiety to satisfaction of mind; from distrust of all to confidence in everyone; . . . in short, from a combination of wretched, irrational circumstances, most unfavorable to everyone, to new arrangements . . . most beneficial to all.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid., I, pp. 1-2.

It was, Owen told the assemblage, for the very reason that he intended to see that the community would have the best of everything, that he planned to go forth to "obtain the aid and assistance of men of science, and of great experience, as instructors and directors in the various departments" of "agriculture, manufactures, education" and even "domestic arrangements." But, he admitted, such individuals were "accustomed to certain accommodations" which they would "not be inclined to relinquish;" and unless such accommodations were provided, they would "not be induced to come, however serviceable and necessary their skill and talent may be to the progress of the establishment." Therefore, "very contrary" to his own "feelings and inclinations," he was going to allow, for a time, "a certain degree of pecuniary inequality." However, he insisted, after these individuals vital to efficient community organization had the "opportunity of witnessing how much more happiness may be experienced under arrangements in which inequality will be unknown," he was certain that they would "soon be reconciled to the change, and wish of their accord to possess the full benefits of equality."¹¹

Owen had done his best to further coat the pill by promising that there would be absolutely no social inequities.

¹¹ Ibid., I, p. 2.

He assured everyone that he wanted no more consideration than anyone else. The only mark of deference accorded individuals would be the respect due to age and experience. Again, though, all this was to be in the future. While he desired that the community be self-governing, he had admitted that it would be necessary for him to be in charge for a time. He explained:

Ardently as I long for the arrival of that period when there shall be no artificial inequality among the whole human race, yet, as no other individual has had the same experience as myself in the practice of the system about to be introduced, I must, for some time partially take the lead in its direction, but I shall rejoice when I can be relieved from this task by the population of this place becoming such proficient in the principles and practices of the social system as to be able to carry it on successfully without my aid and experience. I now live but to see this system established in the world, well knowing that this alone is wanting to secure permanent happiness to all my fellow-creatures.¹²

Owen had then announced the creation of what he termed "the Preliminary Society." He read aloud its constitution, which was of his own formulation. Under its terms he would be recognized as sole proprietor of the enterprise, working through a committee, originally appointed by him, subsequently to be enlarged and confirmed by vote of the populace. This committee's deliberations would be supplemented by special general meetings. Should any "particular or unforeseen case arise," the issue was to

¹²Ibid.

be decided by majority vote.¹³ (In actual practice, though mass meetings came to be held as often as several times a week, the committee never considered itself bound by community recommendations).

As for more specific aspects of the Preliminary Society's constitution, the committee was to assign housing, but all families had to provide their own furniture and their own small tools. Each able-bodied person was to work, under the guidance of the committee, at some trade. Every worker's labor credit would be entered at the community store, enabling him to receive food and other goods in exchange. Anyone could, upon a week's notice, withdraw from the community, being permitted to take with him whatever property he had originally owned, as well as cash for all unexpended credits. On the other hand, any person found guilty of "acting in any way improperly" could be dismissed by the committee from the Society on the same terms that prevailed for those leaving voluntarily.¹⁴ In a word, the Preliminary Society was to be a cooperative not a commune. Owen owned the establishment; the risk, aside from the trouble and expense to the settlers of transporting themselves to New Harmony, was all his. This being the case, he had no intention of relinquishing

¹³Ibid., I, p. 3.

¹⁴Ibid.

control. All community projects and activities were to be subject to his or his representatives' dictation.

All that Owen had said in his speech of April 27, 1825 had been both clear and acceptable to the villagers--for the time being. Faith in Owen had been at its zenith, and the constitution he had promulgated was enticingly vague as to what would happen in the future. It stated his expectation that "at the termination of the second year or between that period and the end of the third year, an association of members may be formed to constitute a Community of Equality, with equal rights [and] property," at which juncture the community would "forever bury all the evils of the old selfish, individual system." No one had seemed to want to pay much attention to the fact that this ambiguous document went on to add that this "Independent Community" was to be established "upon property purchased by its associated members."¹⁵

Owen obviously expected his new society to prosper to such an extent that its members would, within the two to three year time limit mentioned above, achieve a sufficient excess of production over consumption to at least manage a reasonable down payment toward recompensation of his substantial investment. The denizens of his new moral

¹⁵Ibid.

world could hardly argue with this premise. Where else, in so brief a period, with no capital investment on their part, might they become co-owners of so choice a settlement as New Harmony? And if Owen's projected rate of prosperity proved overly optimistic, such phrases as "community of equality," "equal rights," and "equal property" sounded delightfully seductive, especially to those free spirits full of democratic and communitarian zeal who made up a substantial portion of the new society's citizenry. So on May 1, 1825, the Preliminary Society of New Harmony had been formed and the constitution proposed by Owen was adopted.

Such had been the mutual trust and admiration between Owen and the members of his new community, that just prior to his departure for Europe, ostensibly to collect the rest of his family to bring them back to New Harmony to live, he had called a general meeting at which, according to one of the community members, this "mutual confidence was strongly expressed." Owen dissolved the very committee he had appointed less than a month earlier, and requested the society to choose whoever they pleased to take its place. This offer was for some time declined, "as all declared themselves well satisfied with his choice." But under Owen's repeated urging, the community had proceeded with an election--and the first person chosen was William Owen. His election was followed by that of the other former committee members--"a pleasing mark of mutual confidence."

Owen had then gone even further. So well satisfied was he, he informed those assembled, of the community members' ability "to carry the System into full and complete operation," that he offered to sell to them "the entire establishment . . . , at their own price and on their own terms."¹⁶ However, whether in tribute to his entrepreneurial skill, or out of reluctance to take advantage of his generosity, or out of a calculating hope that his next offer might prove still more generous, the membership declined to name a figure, preferring that the property remain in his hands. Owen apparently found nothing in the least alarming in this reluctance on the part of the society to deal with him in concrete terms--yet another proof that he had long since put businesslike practicality behind him.

So on June 5, 1825, Robert Owen had departed for Europe, leaving his son William in charge. There the eldest of his four sons, Robert Dale, had joined his entourage. But his return to New Harmony was leisurely indeed, being delayed, as has been described, by his extensive proselytizing and publicizing efforts. During his absence from the town, the written reports William had sent him from New Harmony would have alarmed a less opti-

¹⁶William Pelham, "Letters of William Pelham, Written in 1825 and 1826," Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), p. 365.

mistic man. As early as February 7, 1825, William had written of his low opinion of the local settlers. He had, he informed his father, "seen only one or two persons who . . . I would consider desirable associates. The more I have seen of the people . . . the less they have pleased me." He went on to add that he hoped for better material from among those his father was presently recruiting.¹⁷

In view of the sentiments quoted above, William Owen should have been unequivocal in his welcome of the scholars, especially since, in another letter to his father, he had commented about them: "They will be an invaluable addition to the Society, for, at present, we have no teachers . . . who understand how to teach, at all, according to the New Principles."¹⁸ That he was not overjoyed is explained in the same letter. He protested the wisdom of his father's urging more members to join the community, especially those unused to working with their hands. What was needed in the already overcrowded town, wrote William, was men who knew a trade, "and above all else good cooks, washerwomen and launderesses." Lack of building materials, he went on, made the construction of

¹⁷Letter from William Owen to Robert Owen: February 7, 1825 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

¹⁸Letter from William Owen to Robert Owen: December 16, 1825 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

necessary housing an impossibility. He added: "We have no room. We have no bedding for anybody. The store will be quite empty in six weeks." But he proved himself a true son of Robert Owen, softening his warnings by stating: "We are all in good spirits."¹⁹

Nor was William Owen exaggerating about New Harmony's needs. Within two months after the formation of the Preliminary Society, the press for admission to the community had made it necessary to place advertisements in the newspapers of neighboring states to discourage others from coming. In its issue of July 9, 1825, the Niles Register reported "Mr. Owen's establishment is already overflowing with people and hundreds are yet on the road to join it."²⁰ The Rappites, who practiced celibacy, had not intended their buildings to be occupied by families with children. Therefore, most living quarters resembled either monastic cells or barracks. And many were beginning to show signs of deterioration. True, by this time the Rappites had all departed, but already the town's population was at least a third larger than it had been when they owned it. The log cabins which the Rappites had begun to replace with more substantial dwellings were once more pressed into

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Niles Register, IV, No. 19 (July 9, 1825).

service, garrets were turned into bedrooms, and it had even proved necessary to allocate a few small families to shelters that had formerly housed livestock.

Nor had the overabundance of manpower insured the community an efficient labor force. The Rappites had left behind them the machinery necessary to engage in the manufacture of textiles, and had enjoyed a good reputation throughout the countryside for their "cloths and flannels." It was of vital importance that this industry continue to operate efficiently, for it constituted the town's only real hope for a significant export industry; there was no other possible source of the cash income necessary to balance purchases made from outside, to say nothing of paying Owen back for his investment. Instead of showing a profit, however, the lack of competent superintendents and "skilled and steady hands"²¹ had resulted in the cotton factory not producing enough to meet expenses, the woollen factory "not commenced,"²² and the dye-house "doing nothing, for want of a skillful person to take direction of it."²³

Although the pottery was also "doing nothing for

30. ²¹New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 4 (October 22, 1825),

²²"Pears Papers," p. 25.

30. ²³New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 4 (October 22, 1825),

want of hands," and the grist and saw mills lay idle, success had been achieved in several areas. Soap, candles, and glue were being produced in excess of community needs; the cotton gin was doing "a good business;" seventeen boot and shoemakers were "constantly employed;" a hat-manufactory employed eight efficient workmen; a ropewalk was in operation; the apothecary shop was "well supplied" and "under the direction of a highly respectable physician," who treated citizens and dispensed medicine without charge; the community store was supplying "all the inhabitants with all their necessities;" and the tavern, which was described as "large, commodious, and well regulated," was reported as "much frequented by strangers" who were attracted to the town either through curiosity or from a desire to partake of its social amusements.²⁴

From an overall point of view, however, the record of craftsmen at work during the time William Owen was left in charge of the community had not been impressive. Although only five persons were actually listed as "unemployed," an official report of October, 1825 listed only 137 "in the employed professions." Since the "employed professions" also included farming, and estimates of the town's population at this time ran from a minimum of 800 to over 1100,

²⁴Ibid.

this figure seems quite low. True, given the haste and confusion in which the community had been established, the problems involved in industrial production might have been expected. But the news from the farming department was ominous indeed. As early as February, 1825, William Owen had warned his father of the necessity of making plans for the coming season, but nothing was done. It had been during that spring that the Preliminary Society was being organized, and, as Arthur E. Bestor, Jr. wryly noted: "Its founders furrowed their brows rather than their fields."²⁵ Fences, left in need of repair by the departing Rappites, were not immediately mended, with the result that "hogs and cows had very materially injured the gardens."²⁶ One disillusioned community member wrote to a friend, "The hogs have been our Lords and Masters this year in the field and garden," and he added, "We are now . . . without vegetables except what we buy."²⁷

Undoubtedly the main reason the work force was such an insignificant proportion of the total population was that it was Owen rather than the town's citizenry who had borne

²⁵ Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Backwoods Utopias (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, c. 1950), p. 164.

²⁶ W. Pelham, p. 382.

²⁷ "Pears Papers," 26.

the brunt of all this inefficiency. The store, as has been noted, continued to supply "all the inhabitants with all their necessities," for which it received no actual cash payment. For, immediately following the establishment of the Preliminary Society, the administrative committee had credited to each adult member the sum of \$80.00 a year, or \$1.54 a week, with children credited on a graduated scale. Members drew against this credit to pay for purchases at the store, their weekly board bill, rent, and charges for various services. This allotment was not meant to be considered a wage, but rather a convenience, since payment for services rendered were not to be computed until the end of the year, unless one decided to withdraw from the community. Demands for increases or at least advanced in the weekly allowance had begun at once. No one argued that the charges made by the committee were excessive; board was set at sixty-four cents a week for adults, with a graduated rate for children; rents ranged from ten dollars a year for a log cabin to forty dollars for a brick or frame house; twenty cents a week was deducted from each member's allowance for the school fund, ten cents for the medical fund, and five per cent for insurance against illness. But those who had come to New Harmony to escape what one citizen termed "all the depraved institutions of the trading world" found the very idea of keeping books

"monstrous."²⁸ And there were many cases of obvious hardship. The bestowal of additional credits quickly became the committee's major function, and, as such, both its greatest source of problems and its most effective means of control. In addition to decisions as to weekly supplements, the committee had in its hands wide discretionary power in the matter of the end of year settlement of individual accounts. The committee operated on the premise that, from the lazy and the incompetent every penny due was to be extracted; on the other hand, if it appeared that an individual had been "prudent and economical," and yet an unfavorable balance existed against him, a further allowance was in order, so as to balance his account, on the principle that the services of every industrious, prudent man were at least equal to the necessary expenses of his living.²⁹

Shoring up the entire system was Owen's money. Some citizens may have been justified in feeling that their services were undervalued and underpaid; but, in the aggregate, the Preliminary Society managed during its nine month existence to consume more than it had produced to the extent of at least thirty thousand dollars--a loss completely under-

²⁸Paul Brown, Twelve Months in New Harmony (Cincinnati: William Hill Woodward, 1827), pp. 16-18.

²⁹W. Pelham, p. 396.

written by Owen.

The Preliminary Society had clearly been a financial disaster, but in a social sense Owen had some justification for considering that it had been full of promise. In so daringly new an experiment there was bound to have been a certain amount of grumbling by idlers and industrious alike, "the one contending that they do enough for their allowance, and the other thinking themselves entitled to more."³⁰ A few loafers had been sent away. Other people had withdrawn, usually because, as one citizen noted, "their sectarian notions in religion were not prevalent here," or "because their ambition and self-importance had not been estimated according to their own ideas." And there were those who had departed because of being "not able to find lodging."³¹ But, by and large, the prevailing attitude had been much like that which had manifested itself on the Philanthropist--one of buoyant, unfettered hope. As one community member had written:

I . . . mean to spend the remainder of my days in this abode of peace and quietness. I have experienced no disappointment. I did not expect to find everything regular, systematic, convenient--nor have I found them so. I did expect to . . . be able to mix with my fellow citizens without fear or imposition--and this expectation has been realized--I am at length free--my body is at my own command, and I enjoy mental liberty, after having

³⁰"Pears Papers," p. 24.

³¹W. Pelham, p. 397.

been so long deprived of it.

Whatever difference of opinion there may be (and there is in reality a great difference in religious matters), I hear no illiberal remarks, I see no overbearing temper exhibited, but each one pursues his own course without meddling with his neighbor.³²

This same witness went on to describe as typical the nightly gatherings in front of the tavern--"not to drink and carouse, but for the purpose of rational conversation." Since no member of the community could "obtain any ardent spirit either at the Tavern or the store, without a certificate from the Doctor that it is needed as medicine," one found at these gatherings "no brawling braggarts, no idle jesters delighting to wound the feelings of each other." Instead, conversations tended to be of "a serious philosophical cast."³³

Many of the terrible hardships and privations, including that of dreary isolation, that were typical of frontier life, were missing at New Harmony. Before he had departed, Owen had established a weekly social calendar, faithfully adhered to during his absence, of dances on Tuesday nights, public discussions on Wednesdays, and concerts on Fridays. These activities had been supplemented by meetings of such organizations as the Female Social Society and the Philanthropic Lodge of Masons, and by

³² Ibid., pp. 373, 377.

³³ Ibid., p. 371.

parades and drills in which the town militia and the students and their teachers participated.

Even prior to the arrival of the scholars, the community was indeed unique in its preoccupation with education. The New Harmony Gazette, weekly newspaper that gave the tiny town yet another distinction, commenced publication on October 1, 1825. Its pages gave considerable space to educational matters. The Gazette's very first issue had contained an advertisement welcoming children from outside the community to enroll in the New Harmony boarding school, but advising those interested that tuition for outsiders would be one hundred dollars a year. And an early edition of the paper made clear the town's deep commitment to education:

It is on the edification of youth the projection of the new social sytem relies for its ultimate success. This society regards education as public property in which each individual has an equal interest. . . . The education and training of youth should be among the first objects of solicitude and care.³⁴

There had been no attempt on the part of the Gazette to ignore educational difficulties. On October 8, 1825 it had printed the frank admission that "those who have been engaged to teach have been found inefficient," primarily because they had "been called upon to act upon principles

³⁴New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 5 (October 29, 1825),

so opposite to all their former notions." The same article had gone on to explain that the system of education the community intended pursuing in its boarding school was "similar to that practiced with such success at New Lanark," a system which had, the Gazette assured its readers, "already received the approbation of many of the most intelligent men in Europe."³⁵

The press of neighboring towns as well as that of the eastern section of the country had from the outset adopted a satirical, if not positively hostile, attitude toward the New Harmony experiment. Its boarding school had not been exempted. The warning printed in the (Vincennes, Indiana) Western Sun and General Advertiser of July 30, 1825 was typical:

Parents and guardians wishing children trained up to principles of deism and taught to disregard that Sacred Book handed down by our forefathers as the 'word of God,' and taught to convert into ball rooms churches which have been erected, dedicated and set apart, for the solemn worship of our Maker .³⁶ will have their children educated at New Harmony.

The Gazette had picked up the editorial challenge in its December 21, 1825 issue. It noted that, "In the early formation of the Society much prejudice existed against our Boarding School, from an idle report that the

³⁵ Ibid., I, No. 2 (October 8, 1825), 14.

³⁶ The Western Sun and General Advertiser (Vincennes, Indiana) July 30, 1825.

children were to be taught that the Christian religion was not true." This report, the Gazette went on, was completely unfounded. In actuality all religious matters were left to parental control, with sectarian doctrines forming no part of the instructional matter. The editorial closed on a triumphant note: "Now the school has one hundred forty students, boarded, clothed and educated at public expense."³⁷

But what had perhaps proved the strongest force operating to keep morale high during the seven months of Robert Owen's absence was the very fact that he was absent. Hence a sense of expectancy had enabled the populace to take present difficulties in stride. Letters written by community members during this interval were shot through with expressions of impatience for his return. One man wrote:

The present Committee is composed of men of first rate ability--but they cannot perform impossibilities. . . . Everyone with whom I converse expresses the utmost confidence in the integrity, wisdom, and benevolence of Mr. Owen, and the day of his return will be a day of rejoicing throughout the settlement. . . . He is certainly a most extraordinary man or he could never thus have attached . . . to him so great a variety of characters as compose this population without a dissenting voice, as far as I know.³⁸

Another citizen, writing to a friend, made plain the tendency

³⁷ New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 3 (December 21, 1825), 102.

³⁸ W. Pelham, pp. 375, 393.

of the Society to put off everything possible until the senior Owen returned. "The Master spirit is not here," he wrote, "and I fear we shall advance but slowly until his reappearance. Expectation hangs on him, . . . and I believe that nothing permanent will be determined until Mr. Owen's return."³⁹

³⁹"Pears Papers," p. 24.

IX

The Permanent Society

William Owen's feelings about the arrival of his father with so many more people unused to manual labor may have been ambivalent. But if so, he was in the minority. The return of the community's messiah, bringing with him \$15,000.00 worth of goods to replenish the inventory of the community store, with Maclure and the contingent of scholars following close behind, was the signal for a mass catharsis. As befitted incipient builders of a new moral world, this catharsis did not take the form of intemperate celebrating. Instead it resulted in a veritable orgy of discussion as to proper guidelines for the unprecedented experiment in communal living that was now to assume a permanent form. The old Rappite church, earlier converted by Owen to a public hall, became the scene of nightly meetings. Young and old were asked to express their sentiments. Settlers from the surrounding countryside made it a point to visit the village to observe for themselves what all the excitement was about. No sooner did regular meetings end than informal ones began, with smaller groups taking up arguments where they had been left off. Even William Pelham,

one of the more dedicated members of the community, found it all so exhausting that he complained, "My mind has been in such constant excitement as to be painful. I want quietness and rest."¹

Most of the scholars, though newly arrived on the scene, were not at all hesitant about expressing themselves. At least one historian believes their democratic leanings may have been what convinced Owen to consent to the abandonment of the Preliminary Society.² However, given the messianic cast of Owen's mind, the enthusiastic reception he received upon his return was probably quite enough in itself to make him feel that it demanded a spectacular response. He confided to Robert Dale that he was so "well pleased with the condition of things at New Harmony" that he intended to propose to the Harmonites "that they should at once form themselves into a Community of Equality, based upon the principle of common property."³ Thus, his previous timetable, promulgated nine months earlier, under which the Preliminary Society was to exist for two or three years, was

¹William Pelham, "Letters of William Pelham, Written in 1825 and 1826," Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), p. 401.

²Caroline Dale Snedeker, The Town of the Fearless (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1931), p. 243.

³Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way (London: Trubner & Co., 1874), p. 253.

now to be scrapped. So feverishly optimistic had he become that the overcrowded conditions and the lack of skilled labor his son William had repeatedly warned him of counted for little when weighed against such factors as the delight of the populace in their savior's return and the supportive presence of a band of intellectuals--many of whom were only too ready to echo his sanguine appraisal.

From the very day of his return to New Harmony Owen began a series of public addresses that had the effect of channeling the flood of enthusiasm his arrival produced into an urge for immediate action in effecting the transformation of the Preliminary Society into a permanent community of equality. On January 25, 1826, thirteen days after his return, a resolution was adopted by the assembled citizenry "that a Community be [formed] as soon as practicable out of the present Society & that from the formation of this community the Preliminary Society do cease."⁴ The meeting then immediately resolved itself into a constitutional convention and the next day proceeded to elect a committee of seven to draft a new constitution. The composition of the committee was further evidence of the extent to which a paternalistic patina overlay the New Harmony operation from

⁴"Proceedings of the Preliminary Meeting," January 25, 1826 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

start to finish. Both Owen and Maclure were elected, though they both were excused, each pleading the press of other affairs. Even so, the actual committee included Owen's two sons, Robert Dale and William, and Donald Macdonald, who had traveled to New Harmony from Scotland in Owen's company. Also elected were three other members of the old governing committee of the Preliminary Society. Thus six of the seven chosen to draft the new constitution belonged to the inner circle that had controlled community affairs from the first.

As his refusal to serve on the drafting committee suggests, Maclure was not among those who encouraged Owen to drastically advance his schedule. But neither did he make any attempt at this crucial moment to restrain him. His excuse was, especially in the midst of so many roseate visions, a reasonable one. He did not want to diversify his efforts, but rather to get busy serving the community in the area in which he was most vitally interested and knowledgeable--that of educational reform. After all, it had taken the inducement of being granted supervision of the community's educational program to overcome his initial reluctance to join forces with Owen. He now intended to hold Owen to his share of the bargain. His eagerness to establish a permanent beachhead for his beloved Pestalozzian method took precedence over everything else. However, by so narrowing his interests, he failed to take into account the fuller

implications of his own doctrine--that meaningful education must be intimately related to its environment, and therefore that the environment must be sensibly structured. Such an attitude on his part was unfortunate, since later he blamed Owen's precipitancy and blind optimism rather than any inherent weakness in the communitarian vision for the failure of the New Harmony experiment. Perhaps if he had presumed upon his newly formed partnership with Owen, he could have acted as a stabilizing influence, something the experiment badly needed. But for the moment, the very newness of their relationship, combined with the approbation Owen's course of action was receiving from a number of Maclure's own friends, probably had some bearing on his failure to counsel Owen to go slow. It does seem plausible that had things moved at a more measured pace, a weeding out process might have taken place, whereby the most discordant and opportunistic elements would have left the community, with those who remained being fit material for so momentous an experiment. On the other hand, Maclure's attitude on the matter is typical of all communitarian reformers of his day: always it was in the details--never in the grand plan itself--that the reason for failure was to be found.

In any event, Maclure was obviously sincere in his intention to concern himself solely with educational affairs. So much so that a summary of his educational plans appeared in the February 15, 1826 issue of the Gazette, the same issue

in which the new constitution of the New Harmony Community of Equality was printed. The constitution had been adopted on February 5, 1826, after twelve days of deliberation, during which there were numerous versions written by members of the drafting committee. On February 1, 1825, the committee had reported a draft, which was printed as well as read, but this was accompanied by a minority report by Macdonald. Then Robert Owen read aloud a series of proposals different from those of the committee, and Robert Dale Owen came up with a completely new document of his own. Robert Owen was prevailed upon to reconcile the conflicting drafts. He declined. In the end the committee hammered out a revised constitution which, after amendment, was approved by all but a small, yet significant, minority of the citizenry.

Amazingly, it was not the community's economic structure, but its political organization that had divided the convention. For some reason, perhaps as one historian has theorized, due to "the intoxicating power of Owen's eloquence,"⁵ or maybe just a general fear of introducing into so paternalistic an atmosphere such an awkward subject, the same reluctance to come to grips with financial realities that had prevailed throughout Owen's dealings with the Preliminary Society still persisted. None of the various drafts

⁵ Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Backwoods Utopias (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, c. 1950), p. 173.

dealt plainly with basic economic problems, nor did anyone point out the omission. As a result, the new constitution was less clear on economic matters than was the constitution under which the Preliminary Society had operated. All book-keeping of credits and debits was to be abandoned. In its place there was to be "the Intendents' opinion of the daily character of each person attached to their occupation," and the requirement that "all the accounts of the community shall be balanced at least once each week."⁶ Whether members' incomes would depend on their rating by the "Intendents," or be based solely upon their needs was not spelled out. Robert Dale Owen's comment that the new constitution made for "liberty, equality, and fraternity in downright earnest"⁷ suggests the latter interpretation, as does the following statement from the constitution itself:

All members of the community shall be considered as one family, and no one shall be held in higher or lower estimation on account of occupation. There shall be similar food, clothing, and education, as near as can be furnished, for all according to their ages; and, as soon as possible, all shall live in similar houses, and in all respects be accommodated alike. Every member shall render his or her best services for the good of the whole. . . .⁸

162. ⁶New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 21 (February 15, 1826),

⁷R. D. Owen, p. 233.

162. ⁸New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 21 (February 15, 1826),

Most important of all, though Owen fully expected that, by purchase or lease, the community would repay him, including reasonable interest, the money he had paid for New Harmony, as well as the money he had expended on behalf of the Preliminary Society, no hint of this very vital assumption appeared in the new constitution. In fact, the document contained several passages inviting confusion on this crucial relationship between Owen and the community members and the property. The constitution held it to be obvious that any system that allowed for the ownership of individual property invariably involved competition and opposition, jealousy and dissension, extravagance and poverty, tyranny and slavery. Therefore, the constitution called for "a reversion to the principal of community of property."⁹ Nor did the further provision, redolent with ambiguity, that "the real estate of the community shall be held in perpetual trust forever for the use of the community and all its members, for the time being,"¹⁰ make the situation any clearer.¹¹

⁹Ibid., I, p. 161.

¹⁰Ibid., I, p. 162.

¹¹Since the financial aspect of the New Harmony situation was shortly to assume an importance--especially in the relationship between Owen and Maclure--belied by its being ignored in the February 5, 1826 constitution, it is brought up to date here. The deal as finally concluded between Owen and the Rappites had called for him to make a down payment of \$95,000.00, to be followed by two additional installments of \$20,000.00 each, due on the first of May, 1827 and 1828, respectively. As noted earlier, in addition to making the

On February 8, 1826, three days after the formation of the Preliminary Society, the governing committee of the now obsolete Preliminary Society reported its evaluation of the work performed by the citizenry to date. The report made depressingly clear the vast chasm between Owen's word pictures of a life of comparative ease and abundance, and the actual struggle and privation that would be necessary merely to eliminate operating at a loss. It was obvious to everyone that, even though the rates of board that had been established were low, the value credit accorded by the committee for work performed was not going to enable anyone to achieve a surplus of earnings over expenses.¹² Nor did the discrepancy between the sort of work week Owen had

down payment Owen had expended at least \$30,000.00 subsidizing the Preliminary Society, and on his return to New Harmony in January, 1826, had brought with him \$15,000.00 worth of goods for the community store. Even though the total of these expenditures came to \$140,000.00, and he still owed the Rappites \$40,000.00, all of which represented roughly four-fifths of his entire fortune, he was amazingly sanguine. Apparently he had no fears about being repaid by the community, and he further believed, in spite of the absence of any formal agreement, that he and Maclure were united in full partnership. Such was hardly Maclure's understanding of the matter. Though Maclure had had books, paintings, and scientific supplies of considerable value delivered to New Harmony, and though he freely admitted that he had agreed to share liability for half of Owen's future losses on the experiment up to a maximum of \$10,000.00, he emphatically denied that he had agreed to anything like a full partnership. However, none of this misunderstanding surfaced at the time the Parliament Society's constitution was ratified, which may also help explain Maclure's lack of immediate concern over Owen's quixotic impulsiveness.

¹² "New Harmony--an Adventure in Happiness: Papers of Thomas and Sarah Pears," ed. Thomas Clinton Pears, Indiana Historical Society Publications, XI, No. 1 (1933), 65, 76.

intimated was imminent and the schedule actually now put into effect go unnoticed. One of the citizens wrote of her disillusionment on this score:

Instead of four or five hours labor being sufficient for one's maintenance, as people were led to imagine by Mr. Owen's representations, the bell is now rung at half past five to get up; at six to go to work; at seven for breakfast; at eight for work again; at twelve for dinner; at one to go to work; at six in the evening to return home. If those who are regularly employed are not punctual, they are liable to be reported at the nightly meeting of the intendants. If they are sick they must have a certificate from the physician. If this is not slavery I know not what is.¹³

Quite plainly the steadily growing deficit between what the community produced and what it spent indicated that whatever economies were being effected by labor exchange and cooperation, they were not proving sufficient to overcome the inefficient work patterns and downright sloth being exhibited by many community members. The Preliminary Society had had an air of hopeful impermanence about it that had made for a certain amount of amiability and toleration of the flaws of others. This attitude had still prevailed as recently as the constitutional convention, when it was readily agreed to welcome all previous members into the "Community of Equality," and the proposal that new applicants for membership should be screened during a month's residence had been rejected as discriminatory. But now the full implication of following this new

¹³ Ibid., pp. 73-74.

constitution's dictum to consider themselves "as one family" began to dawn upon the Harmonites. Even Owen's vaunted powers of persuasion could not avert the lowering of morale. "I feel more distressed at the thought of entering this new community than I can express," wrote a depressed housewife. "Hope," she continued in the same vein,

which had never before quite deserted me seems now to have taken her flight. Mr. Owen has delivered several lectures here, but . . . I always return from them more unhappy than I went. . . .

No one is to be favored above the rest, as all are to be in a state of perfect equality. Oh, if you could see some of the rough uncouth creatures here, I think you would find it rather hard to look upon them exactly in the light of brothers and sisters. I am sure I cannot in sincerity look upon these as my equals, and that if I must appear to do it, I cannot either act or speak the truth.¹⁴

Amidst the developing disunity, perhaps because of it, individuals began to coalesce into splinter groups. One particular set of members found itself in agreement over its distaste at the thought of associating themselves permanently with those they considered to be atheists. Although this group, composed chiefly "native back-woodsmen, strongly tinctured with methodism,"¹⁵ had accepted the looser commitments of the Preliminary Society, they comprised that minority who had already made their restiveness plain by having

¹⁴Ibid., p. 60

¹⁵Bestor, p. 176.

refused to sign the new constitution. By February 15, 1826, a scant ten days after the Permanent Society had come into being, they had convinced Owen that they would be a less abrasive force if allowed to form a separate community. Accordingly he agreed to sell them approximately thirteen hundred acres of uncleared land a couple of miles from the village proper. (Ironically, although this settlement came to be commonly referred to as Community No. II, it was officially named Macluria, probably in the hope that some sort of financial support from that mysterious and reputedly wealthy person might be in the offing. That a community specifically formed in opposition to atheistic influence would name itself after Maclure, coming on top of the Gazette's February 15, 1826 issue having printed his name as M'Clure, offers convincing proof of just how little that gentleman had thus far intruded himself into local affairs).

Soon after the initial secession another group of separatists, composed of English farmers, banded together on the combined basis of nationality and disdain for the inefficient farming methods of their neighbors. The example set by those who had so recently established Macluria encouraged them to seek permission from Owen to form Community No. III. He again cooperated, granting them fourteen hundred acres of what everyone agreed was the best land available for \$7,000.00, to be paid in installments.

Community III took as its official name one even more bizarre--though certainly more appropriate than Macluria's. It took the name of Feiba-Peveli, which was determined by following the suggestion of one Stedman Whitwell, who had devised a method of translating its latitude and longitude into letters.

Both the new communities were organized in March, 1826. Aside from their names, neither wrote any startling innovations into their respective constitutions, which were quite similar to the one that had been adopted by the parent society. Significantly, however, both documents included provisions for screening future applicants and expelling lazy members. The citizens of Macluria soon erected nine cabins into which were crowded eighty persons; and that summer Macluria's population swelled to about 150. Only about forty people settled in Feiba-Peveli, but they distinguished themselves by building frame houses as well as log cabins and by having glass windows. They also made a case for national clannishness, for in the end they continued their association long after both the Macluria and New Harmony communities were disbanded.

If Maclure was remote from the first two schisms that rocked New Harmony, he was necessarily a part of, though not a leading spirit in the next one. He had been guilty of considerable self-delusion when he wrote of finding at New

Harmony a "perfect equality" which outweighed "every idea of fortune and ambition."¹⁶ For even after the dissidents who had formed Communities No. II and III had eliminated themselves from the parent community, those who remained found themselves divided into two basic groups. Robert Dale Owen, his youngest brother, William, and Robert L. Jennings, a former Universalist minister who had been in charge of the educational department prior to Maclure's arrival, were the formulators of a plan to help further purify the experiment. They came forward with an organizational plan for a Community No. IV, under which most of the buildings of New Harmony would be taken over by those citizens of a more idealistic nature, from which those persons not felt to be worthy material would be excluded. This proposal laid bare yet another source of divisiveness. Support for Community No. IV came mainly from the recent passengers of the "Boatload of Knowledge," a faction cohesive enough to be termed the "Literati."¹⁷ Opposed to the "Literati" were those dubbed the "Constitutionalists."¹⁸ Actually the latter group were united less by their devotion

¹⁶William Maclure, "Communication from William Maclure: July 4, 1826," Co-operative Magazine, I (December, 1826), 375.

¹⁷"Pears Papers," p. 67.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 67.

to the new constitution than by their suspicion and resentment of the intellectual element of the community. They found the intellectuals impatient with more ordinary mortals, and guilty of a tendency to ridicule their less imaginative fellow-citizens. They saw in the "Literati's" drive for Community No. IV a "scheme . . . to monopolize the town," a "desire to get rid of some of the members whom they disliked" and an expression of their "love of power."¹⁹ In such an atmosphere "perfect equality," at least on a social plane, was, of course, impossible. The most innocent diversions became susceptible to snobbish perversions. A new costume, probably inspired by the one that had been worn by pupils at New Lanark, was introduced. It consisted of pantaloons and tunics for both men and women. But so sharp had social distinctions become that, by virtue of the haste with which the style spread among the intellectuals, what had been intended as a mark of equality became instead a badge of membership in the "highest class of society."²⁰

Karl Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, visited New Harmony from April 13 to 21, 1826. He was a shrewd, if

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 71-72.

²⁰ Karl Bernhard, "Travels Through North America, During the Years 1825 and 1826," Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), pp. 424, 430. See also: "Pears Papers," p. 82.

somewhat censorious observer of several examples of the community's failure to eliminate social distinctions. At the evening dances he attended he noticed that most of "the lower class . . . men did not take a share in the dance, but read newspapers which were scattered over the side-tables." When, in an attempt "to prevent all possible partialities," partners were determined by drawing numbers, "the young ladies of the better class . . . turned up their noses . . . at the democratic dancers." Between dances, these same young ladies "kept themselves in a corner under Madame Fretageot's protection, and formed a little aristocratical club." Nor, noted the Duke, were more mundane activities exempt from social considerations. The idea of eating at a communal table with the lower class shocked "the feelings of people of education;" and even in so ostensibly democratic an environment as one of Owen's lectures, "the better educated members kept themselves together, and took no notice of the others." So pervasive, in fact, did the Duke find snobbery among the better educated that he predicted: "In spite of the equality so much recommended, this class of persons will not mix with the common sort, and I believe that all the well brought up members are disgusted, and will soon abandon the society."²¹

²¹K. Bernhard, pp. 423-24, 426, 430-31, 432-33.

Social snubs were not the only flaws in the "perfect equality" Maclure professed to find at New Harmony. In the material sphere, some seemed to be, like George Orwell's pigs, a little more equal than others. Maclure himself was probably the greatest sinner in this regard. He and Madame Fretageot, impervious to gossip, took up residence in George Rapp's former abode. It was by far the most impressive dwelling in the town, a huge mansion, made of stone, anything but typical of village houses of the time. As was the case with most of Maclure's homes, pupils were boarded there, and several rooms were turned into classrooms. But there was still ample space for entertaining the many guests whom Maclure and Madame Fretageot enjoyed having drop in at night. The Duke spent several "amiable" evenings there, finding Maclure an "interesting old gentleman, . . . a man distinguished for learning," full of "instructive conversation."²² Convivial host Maclure may well have been. But living in what was easily the most prestigious home in the village, and operating there what amounted to a salon for the local intelligencia and distinguished visitors was hardly practicing perfect equality. Yet ironically, and probably because Robert Owen was so much the focal point of community life at this time, what record there is of resentment of preferential treatment was directed primarily against him,

²²Ibid., pp. 422, 432, 433-34.

not Maclure. Actually, Owen did a much better job than Maclure of living in a style that avoided all suggestion of ostentation. He lodged at the local tavern, and was proud of the fact that while living there he ate very sparingly, thereby keeping his expenses down to only six cents a day. (To be fair to Maclure, in the matter of eating he may well have matched or even bettered Owen's frugality; several of his acquaintances attributed his ill health in later life to the painfully sparse diet he prescribed for himself). But even such circumspect behavior as Owen exhibited was not egalitarian enough for some. Paul Brown, who arrived in New Harmony on April 2, 1826, and lost little time in becoming Owen's severest critic, claimed that at the tavern Owen was "copiously provided a luxurious regale." While such a description of inexpensive frontier tavern fare was obviously wildly and wilfully inaccurate, there is a ring of truth in Brown's further contention that "complaints were often made that some houses got a greater supply of provisions than others."²³

The proposal to form Community No. IV heightened resentment already strong enough, thanks to the numerous invidious distinctions that existed between the intelli-

²³Paul Brown, Twelve Months in New Harmony (Cincinnati: William Hill Woodward, 1827), p. 24.

gencia and the rest of the community. If Owen agreed to the plan, the distinctions would clearly become physical as well as psychological. One parent expressed the anger and concern felt by many:

This scheme, as you may suppose, when discovered put the whole town into confusion. We were completely two parties. . . .

Most of the individuals here assembled came principally on account of educating their children. How was this to be accomplished when those who were brought here for the express purpose of taking this important charge were going to separate themselves from the rest?²⁴

Since the composition of the group favoring the formation of Community No. IV was virtually identical with that which later made up the Education Society, Maclure, however little urgency he might have felt about the establishment of such a community, undoubtedly would have become one of its members. He was not, however, among those deputized to meet with Owen to discuss the proposition, nor is there any evidence that he attempted to use his prestige as a partner to persuade Owen to accede. Thus it seems safe to assume that he was for the moment indifferent or even opposed to the scheme. So was Owen, in spite of the fact that his sons were among the ringleaders pressing for its acceptance. He had apparently decided that enough secessions had taken place. He rejected their request for financial aid, and refused to partition the town into separate communities.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 421.

Instead he made a shrewd counter-proposal, offering the leaders of the movement whatever size tract of virgin forest they wanted, "where they might go and cut down trees and build cabins as fast as they pleased." It was obvious to all that this gesture, while exhibiting an apparent lack of bias, would not be accepted. "This," as one of the critics of the Literati noted, "did not quite suit them, as they were not in general very well calculated for hewing down timber."²⁵ Thus the movement toward yet further segregation was abandoned. But thwarted though it was by Owen's tactful opposition, the support it had received from the intelligencia probably had something to do with Maclure's later decision to insist on a separate, distinct entity for the Educational Department. On the other hand, the hostility and suspicion the plan aroused may have helped generate the eventual recalcitrance on the part of the citizenry to accord the Educational Department dominion status.

For the time being, however, the result was a breathing space. The experiment needed it badly. Shaken by the string of secessions either already accomplished or impending, the citizenry had voted on February 19, 1826 "to request the aid of Mr. Owen for one year, in conducting

²⁵"Pears Papers," p. 71.

and superintending the concerns of the Community, in conformity with the principles of the constitution."²⁶

This sentiment was formally agreed upon on March 4, 1826, with the community coming "under the sole direction of Mr. Owen until the 1st January, 1827, and agreeing to be responsible for the loss if any, and to keep the gain if any."²⁷

Made uneasy by all the separatist upheavals, Owen decided the time had finally come to attempt to clarify the exact nature of the financial obligations he expected the Harmonites to assume. He therefore offered to sell his property on time to the community at a value to be assessed by a committee made up of community members. Payment, including five per cent interest, was to be spread over twelve years. Should the community default, the property would revert back to him, provided only that it never be used other than as a communitarian settlement.

Upon being informed of this proposed community commitment, the citizenry had good reason to become more than ever conscious of the deficiencies of individual members. The citizens of Communities No. II and III had learned of their financial responsibilities prior to their

²⁶ New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 22 (February 22, 1826), 175.

²⁷ "Pears Papers," p. 72.

being granted the land for which they had petitioned. Since they had been assessed only \$5,000.00 and \$7,000.00 respectively, they had voiced no objections. But complete consternation followed the assessment committee's report of March 18, 1826 on the extent of Community No. I's debt. Containing within its boundaries practically all the buildings left by the Rappites, it was evaluated at \$126,520.00. To those running the ideological gamut from opportunistic optimists to devout communists, the thought of making any payment at all was execrable. But even among more realistic members the reaction was one of dismay. "Whatever may be the terms," wrote one citizen, "I have no intention of making myself responsible, for I can see no prospect of producing enough to maintain us."²⁸

Seeing the debilitating effect made on the already low community morale by the property evaluation, Owen acted quickly. He selected a "nucleus" of twenty-four citizens who were willing to accept the financial terms he had outlined, and signed an agreement with them, under which they assumed responsibility to make the necessary payments. They were in turn granted authority to admit others to their group on the same terms, as well as to set up subordinate types of membership. So hard did Owen push for

²⁸ Ibid., p. 76.

this new reorganization plan that on March 21, 1826, only three days after the issuance of Community No. I's property evaluation, the "nucleus" had assumed control of the village government.

X

Maclure's Curriculum

In the midst of the almost constant political turmoil that was raging all about him, Maclure was determined to hold fast to his intention to limit his involvement to supervision of the educational phase of the experiment. By agreeing to join the New Harmony community, he had greatly influenced the decision of several distinguished scientists as well as teachers experienced in Pestalozzian methodology to throw in their lot with the experiment. He had made arrangements for shipment to the tiny village on the Wabash of literally tons of specimens of natural phenomena he had collected over the years, in addition to books and scientific apparatus he had purchased. Crates loaded with these items were continually arriving. Thus, in terms of teaching potential and equipment necessary to establish a school system that would serve as an object lesson to the rest of the civilized world, he had insured a seeming abundance of the proper ingredients; and he was sure that in the Pestalozzian method he had a superb formula for combining these ingredients. As to the end product he expected, there is a certain amount of ambiguity concerning his aims. At

least two historians suggest that he was so far-sighted as to visualize an educational organization similar in overall structure to a modern university, with a faculty that would combine research, teaching and publishing, each complimenting the other.¹ Certainly he did all he could to encourage scientific research and he also saw to the establishment of a school printing press. But given the intensity of his feeling that children should be educated primarily in terms of making themselves less vulnerable to economic vicissitudes, it seems probable that he did not expect the research scientists who were on the scene to spend much time teaching, nor did he expect the results of their more specialized studies to be part of the basic curriculum. What he did expect was that matters deemed fit for general study and material considered worthy of scientific research would both have intimate and practical connections with the community's environment.

Maclure's eagerness to put his reforms into operation was made clear by the alacrity with which he assumed from Robert L. Jennings control of the educational department, and by his publication of an educational prospectus in the New Harmony Gazette of February 15, 1826. Jennings

¹Harley J. Van Cleave, "The New Harmony Venture and Its Relation to Natural Science," Bios, XXII, No. 4 (1961). See also: Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Backwoods Utopias (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, c. 1950), p. 192.

apparently relinquished supervision with no regrets, having already decided not to remain in New Harmony much longer. With Owen fully occupied by the various political schisms that were constantly developing, Maclure was assured of a free hand. Not that there was anything in his prospectus that would have caused Owen to take umbrage. Far from it. The Gazette proclaimed, in fact, Maclure's intention "to organize the New Harmony Boarding School, on the principles . . . which are similar to those which for some years have regulated the instruction in the New Lanark schools," adding that "in almost all respects these principles differ essentially from those which usually govern the instruction of youth."² Since as far back as October 8, 1825 the Gazette had stated that the New Lanark system of education would be imitated in New Harmony's boarding school,³ Maclure's reiteration of this design can hardly have alone been responsible for the rise in school enrollment and the general air of hopeful expectancy that now prevailed. The key to the influx of students lies in that same October 8, 1825 issue of the Gazette, which had gone on to admit the inefficiency based primarily upon the fact that the teachers were not up to "the challenge of the new methodology, as

² New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 21 (February 15, 1826), 166.

³ Ibid., I, No. 2 (October 8, 1825), 14.

they found themselves called upon to act upon principles so opposite to all their former notions."⁴ The arrival of Maclure and the rest of the Boatload of Knowledge was assumed to be the much needed remedy to this difficulty. For now available were teachers with both impressive intellectual credentials as well as experience in the application of Pestalozzian methodology.

No wonder the school population, which the Gazette of December 21, 1825 had listed at 140, now burgeoned to close to four hundred pupils, some of them outsiders who had to pay the hundred-dollar yearly tuition fee. However, although the community tended to categorize all those who had been passengers on the Philanthropist as educators, actual teachers were in somewhat short supply. Several of the scientists were primarily interested in research, and though they might agree to give an occasional lecture on their particular discipline at the community hall, they had no intention of teaching the young on a day to day basis. Madame Fretageot might find this attitude reprehensible, complaining of Troost and Lesueur that they "shut themselves up in their cabinet," performing work she deemed "perfectly useless to the happiness of humankind;"⁵ but

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duolos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 390.

Maclure, who knew at first hand the joys of scientific research, could not bring himself to be critical. Instead he wrote to his old ally in educational reform, Neef, urging him to make haste to join the experiment, even if it meant leaving his movable property and family behind.⁶ In addition, by hiring several persons who had neither training nor experience as teachers, Maclure put into practice the theory, endorsed by both Pestalozzi and Owen, that teachers need not be products of a formal education.

Apparently a willingness to try to put Pestalozzian theory into practice was the only necessary qualification. Thomas Pears, a middle-aged citizen who had no previous teaching experience whatsoever, wrote, "Good teachers are wanted. . . . I have some idea of going into the day school, but it is uncertain."⁷ He did not do so, but it was his lack of faith in the community's future rather than the absence of teaching credentials that prevented his becoming a teacher. Neither Robert Dale Owen, nor Lucy Sistaire, who was soon to become Thomas Say's wife, nor Mrs. Martha Chase, nor any of Neef's four daughters and

⁶ William Pelham, "Letters of William Pelham, Written in 1825 and 1826," Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), p. 407.

⁷ "New Harmony--An Adventure in Happiness: Papers of Thomas and Sarah Pears," ed. Thomas Clinton Pears, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XI, No. 1 (1933), 26.

one son, all of whom eventually joined the teaching staff of the education department had had any formal training or teaching experience prior to their being accented as teachers at New Harmony. However, present from the first were such experienced hands as Madame Fretageot and Phiquepal, as well as Joseph Applegarth, who had presided over Owen's school at New Lanark. And on March 20, 1826, Neef and his wife, Lucy, who had been trained by both Pestalozzi and Neef himself, arrived.

Thus, on balance, the teaching fraternity, even excluding such scientific luminaries as Say, Lesueur and Troost, was a healthy blend of experience and youthful idealism--especially when compared with typical teaching staffs of the day, which were for the most part composed of those who had failed at some other career, or were marking time, or were disabled physically, or addicted to drink. Still, even in the calmest social climate, which New Harmony certainly was not, possibilities for dissension were obvious. Not only did the staff include researchers and pedants, those with considerable teaching experience and those with none, and more than a fair share of voluble and volatile personalities. On the most cursory glance the educational community was wide open to the charge of nepotism: there were Neef, his wife, and their five children; Madame Fretageot's close ties with Maclure; Robert Dale Owen; Say and his wife, Lucy. To further complicate matters, should

relations between the two sponsors of the community worsen-- as they soon did--the educational community might well be expected to split on the basis of previous loyalties: Madame Fretageot, Neef and his family, Say and his wife, Troost, Lesueur, and Phiquepal siding with Maclure; Robert Dale Owen and Applegarth supporting Owen. Yet, strangely enough-- perhaps a further proof of the independent spirit of so many of the community's citizens--only in the case of Madame Fretageot's supposed influence over Maclure is there any evidence that the matter of favoritism was ever bruited about; and when the split between Maclure and Owen did come, Phiquepal went over to Owen's camp, while Robert Dale Owen did his best to remain neutral.

Maclure's educational overview was couched in broad generalities. He introduced his theme by alluding to the "Great or Fundamental Principles of Education," writing:

The great or fundamental principle is, never to attempt to teach children what they cannot comprehend, and to teach them in the exact ratio of their understanding, without omitting one link in the chain of ratiocination; proceeding always from the known to the unknown; from the most easy to the most difficult; practicing the most extensive and accurate use of all the senses; exercising, improving and perfecting all the mental and corporeal faculties by quickening combination; accelerating and carefully arranging comparison; judiciously and impartially making deductions; summing up the results free from prejudice, and cautiously avoiding the delusions of the imagination--a constant source of ignorance and error.⁸

⁸ New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 21 (February 15, 1826), 166.

Such sentiments certainly sounded a lot more sensible than most of what then passed for educational theory; but the problem of just how, when faced with a group of pupils numbering as many as thirty or forty, or more, one teaches each child "in the exact ratio of [his] understanding, without omitting one link in the chain of ratiocination" went as unanswered in Maclure's prospectus as it does today. Another thing his plan had in common with many such pronouncements of far more recent origin was its pseudo-scientific, mechanistic jargon. His language makes quite clear both his effort to approach problems of education in scientific fashion and the extent to which he credited the possibilities of machinery to affect man's life style. He wrote:

The children are to learn mechanism by machines or exact models of them, arithmetic by a machine called the arithmometer, geometry by a machine called the trigonometer, by which the most useful propositions of Euclid are reduced to the comprehension of a child five or six years old. . . . They learn natural philosophy by the most improved and simple instruments. They learn music through the medium of . . . a sonometer.⁹

There is no solid evidence that any of these wonderful teaching devices Maclure described ever were actually put into use in the New Harmony schools. However, there was one instrument, a very elaborate thing indeed, that was actually utilized, which gives further evidence of the extent

⁹Ibid., I, pp. 166-67.

to which pseudo-scientism held sway. It was constructed in the form of a large rectangular plate on which one could supposedly chart his individual development in crucial areas of character formation. On it was the superscription: Scale of Human Faculties and Qualities at Birth. There were ten categories: self-attachment; affections; judgment; imagination; memory; reflection; perception; excitability; courage; strength. Each category was scaled from zero to one hundred, and each had a separate slide that could be moved up or down. Thus at any given moment a child could, after what was hoped would be "a mature self-examination,"¹⁰ assess his rate of progress--presumably with something like scientific accuracy. It is not known just who devised this contraption, nor whether or not it was produced in sufficient quantity to be issued to all the students. The fact that only one example has been uncovered, and that a damaged one, suggests that it, like so many other mechanical aids to learning which initially raise such high hopes, quickly proved itself not worth the trouble and expense of its construction.

Fortunately for the educational welfare of the

¹⁰Karl Bernhard, "Travels Through North America During the Years 1825 and 1826," Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), p. 435.

community, Maclure was not so completely captivated by the idea of education as a science that he neglected to advocate some very sensible and humane touches. For example, the children were to learn "natural history in all its branches by examining the objects in substance or accurate representations of them in design or prints; anatomy by skeletons and wax figures; geography by globes and maps--most of the last of their own construction."¹¹ Thus the New Harmony schools endorsed the modern concept not only of extensive use of visual aids, but of enhancing their meaning by constructing them as well. Nor was the study of natural sciences thought of by Maclure as a mere facet of the school curriculum. He was enough a utilitarian to fear the grave danger of character erosion inherent in allowing children to have free time on their hands. But he was also capable of enough empathy to reject the solution most commonly offered--that of a brutally long working day. Instead, he suggested:

While parents are giving their children the useful knowledge to carry them respectably through life, they ought not, on any account, to neglect giving them an occupation or amusement to fill up their spare time, the want of which is the cause of most of the drinking and debauchery of youth. The best, most useful and cheapest pastime is the natural sciences, which can be practiced in all countries and all climates at the least expense of either money or morals; the pursuits of which are production of health, liberality, and the utmost extension of toleration, as there is room enough for all,

¹¹New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 21 (February 15, 1826), 166.

without jostling or infringing on each other's rights or property; they banish envy and promote contentment, raising their votaries above the silly squabbles of disappointed ambition and teaching them an accurate mode of examining the properties of substances they are interested in knowing.¹²

Another enlightened approach was the provision in the curriculum for various sorts of gymnastics, though "always, preferably, those that may lead to utility, such as marching, climbing, etc.." The idea that school was a place to exercise one's body as well as one's mind was almost unheard of in those days, as was Maclure's further dictum that the mind should never be fatigued "by giving more than an hour's attention to the same thing." And his advice to teachers, that "the master loses none of his influence with his pupils by acknowledging that he is ignorant of the subject in question, but will learn it along with them," is yet another example of the depth of his understanding of the extent to which psychological considerations affect motivation. But perhaps the most truly innovative of all Maclure's plans was the insistence upon manual training. Lithographing and engraving as well as printing were to be carried on in the school. The boys were all to "learn at least one mechanical art--for instance, setting type and printing," with the culminating activity in

¹²William Maclure, Opinions on Various Subjects, 3 vols.; (New Harmony, Indiana: Printed at the school press, 1831-1838), III, 224.

that particular area being their own publishing of "all their elementary books."¹³ Nor were printing skills by any means the only trades to be taught. In a letter he wrote on March 16, 1826, to his friend Benjamin Silliman, Maclure admitted that "the obstinate prejudices of men against making any useful or radical change" had long prevented him from establishing "experimental farming schools for the education of the children of the productive classes." However, he went on, since "this sociable system of Mr. Owen" offered "all the means and materials effecting" such educational "reform amongst this same useful class, I have joined him in all his undertakings on this side of the Atlantic, and we intend to carry them into execution, as far as a considerable capital will permit." He then enumerated some of the manual activities in which the students would be trained:

Already part of the boys' school is so far organized that they make shoes for themselves, and will soon do it for the whole community. They will likewise have workshops for tailors, carpenters, weavers, &c. in the school, all of which trades will be alternately practiced, by way of recreation from their mental labour of Arithmetic, Mathematics, Natural History, &c. as a useful substitute for gymnastics; to which will be added agriculture and gardening.¹⁴

¹³ New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 21 (February 15, 1826), 166-67.

¹⁴ Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 331.

Nor were the girls to be neglected. Not only was New Harmony the first school system in which the girls were "taught the same things as the boys;" the girls were also to undergo practical work experience, even if of a less specialized nature. Their educational program included "work in the cotton and woolen mills" as well as "washing, cooking, &c.." However, they were not to work more than "half a day on any one kind of labour, thereby alleviating the fatigue by variety."¹⁵

In addition to those trades mentioned by Maclure in his letter to Silliman, at some time or another during the existence of the industrial school at New Harmony each of the following manual skills was also taught to the boys: drawing, wheelwrighting, wood-turning, blacksmithing, cabinet-making, hat-making, and taxidermy; while the girls were instructed in sewing, dressmaking, millinery, and housekeeping. In actual practice, however, Maclure's original intention that all trades be alternately practiced was abandoned. Instead each child was permitted to choose the occupation in which he wanted to be trained. If he had no particular preference, an attempt was made to assign him to one for which he had special aptitude. Every child was expected to become proficient in at least one area. When

¹⁵Ibid.

he did he might then receive permission to enter another training program. Previously Fellenberg at Hofwyl had emphasized manual labor as an integral part of his School of Industry's curriculum; and the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, an agricultural and technical college, had been in existence in Troy, New York since 1824. But Fellenberg's school concerned itself with agricultural and home-industrial type pursuits, while Rensselaer was strictly a technical school for advanced students. So the New Harmony schools have a valid historical claim as being the first to introduce a trade school program worthy of the name.

The curricular overview Maclure presented was significant for its omissions as well as its proposed innovations. Just as he divided mankind into two basic species, the productive and the non-productive, so too with education. In his view the productive subjects were "those which we acquire through the senses," while the non-productive were "those which train the imagination, such as literature, mythology, etc.." So vehement were his feelings on the matter that he considered the teaching of "non-productive knowledge which is merely ornamental or amusing to the possessor" such a waste of time as to be "a deviation from right and justice."¹⁶ While modern languages were not

¹⁶W. Maclure, I, 48.

to be neglected, with the pupils expected to "learn as many languages as there are languages spoken by the boys of different nations in the school, each instructing the other in the vocabulary of his language," the ancient languages, so integral a part of the program in traditional schools of the day, were to be completely ignored.¹⁷

Literature was, of course, another subject not to be taught. "The flowers of rhetoric," he warned elsewhere in his writings,

only serve to disguise the truth. Avoid all that turns on the pivot of imagination. . . . Nothing but positive knowledge ought to be taught to children--the properties of matter and motion--truths that don't change with the caprice of fashion or opinion, but make the same impression on the senses of all sensitive beings.¹⁸

On the matter of religion Maclure adhered to the precedent already established at New Harmony of teaching no doctrine, allowing no reading of the Bible, but emphasizing the teaching of morals and ethics. In one of his essays he offered a defense of his position that went far beyond mere justification to reveal how deep was his bias against organized religion:

Teaching exclusive religious dogmas, or catechism to children only sows the seeds of discord, hatred, persecution and cruelty, which grows up with them, and

166. ¹⁷New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 21 (February 15, 1826),

¹⁸W. Maclure, I, 93.

ripens into the horrible massacres that have stained Christianity with more blood than has been spilled in all wars that history gives an account of.¹⁹

Underlying Maclure's curricular superstructure were several basic assumptions. One was his conviction that schools should be open to all children of both sexes, who would be accepted at the earliest possible age, and clothed, fed, sheltered and educated--all at public expense. To the argument that this was a lot to ask of parents accustomed to think of their children as economic assets, he countered with a second article of faith--that every child should be taught a trade in order that he might not only later in life be able to be self-supporting and independent, but, while still a student, by laboring at his trade entirely defray the cost of his maintenance. He wrote:

My experience does not permit me to doubt that children, under proper management, can feed and clothe themselves by the practice of the best and most useful part of their instruction; and in place of being a burthen, they would be a help to all connected with them.²⁰

What Maclure was really pressing for, he admitted, were "Spartan systems of self-supporting free public schools." The advantages he saw in establishing all schools along these lines have been summarized by George B. Lockwood

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 331.

as the following:

(1) The children would be divorced during their formative years from the handicap of ignorant and immoral homes.

(2) The productive classes, relieved of the burden of maintaining the children, would be better able to work out their own redemption.

(3) The forcible removal, if necessary, of children to the State schools would defeat the indifference of parents toward education.

(4) By making the surroundings as well as the instruction of children the same, a greater equality of opportunity of all social classes would be secured.

(5) By the grouping of the children in large numbers, they could be instructed and maintained for less than the cost under the present arrangement either to the parents of supporting them or to the State of educating them.

(6) Only by a system wherein the State commands the entire time of a child can he be properly taught a useful trade that will insure his industrial independence as a citizen.

(7) Through the useful trades and occupations taught the pupils, free, equal, and universal schools could be made self-supporting, thus relieving the productive classes of the burden of maintaining them.

(8) Best of all, the complete surrender of all children to the care of the republic would settle, once and forever, in the affirmative the question of State responsibility for the education of its wards.²¹

For the time being, Maclure realized, the New Harmony schools would have to compromise with this ideal, charging children from outside the community a yearly tuition of one hundred dollars. Still, he consoled himself with the thought that his schools would be "giving a more useful practical education at a far cheaper rate than can be got

²¹George B. Lockwood, The New Harmony Movement (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1905), pp. 268, 270.

in any part of the Union."²²

Yet another of Maclure's fundamental ideas was his insistence that methods of punishment prevalent in contemporary schools be rejected in favor of more enlightened ways of motivating children. He agreed completely with the philosophy that had prevailed at New Lanark: that all rewards and punishments except those of nature should be forbidden; that any child who acted improperly be pitied rather than chastized; and that all liberty consistent with good order be allowed.²³ He had the following to say about the debilitating effects upon the learning process that were liable to result from the creation of fear in pupils by teachers:

Fear is a sensation so humiliating, irksome, and disagreeable to all the feelings of our species, . . . that the best disciplined temper cannot prevent attaching hatred to the cause of it. But of all the manifold and destructive effects that fear has on the human family none is so injurious to the well-being of society and so totally subversive of the true interest of mankind as the fear of the child for the teacher, for, in addition to the innumerable bad consequences inseparable from fear at any stage of life, it doses the mind against receiving instruction from the only source that is accessible to children, their entire attention being occupied in watching the symptoms of anger in their teacher in order to ward off the blow or contrive some means of escaping punishment.²⁴

²²Ibid., n. 348.

²³Robert Dale Owen, An Outline of the System of Education at New Lanark (Glasgow: Wardlaw and Cunningham, 1824), pp. 9, 15, 24.

²⁴New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 26 (February 22, 1826), 172.

In an article he wrote later on the same subject Maclure went beyond the mere denouncing of the use of scare tactics by teachers. "Attention," he argued, "is the only medium through which instruction passes into the mind; without it nothing makes a lasting impression." Since, in a state of fear one's attention is distracted, how much more sensible it would be to secure it "by good-will arising out of the pleasure and amusement children take in exercises that interest them." Following this line of logic, he came to the very modern conclusion that "the essential business and duty of a teacher is to find out the inclination of his pupils, and teach them any and all the useful lessons he may find they study with pleasure."²⁵

²⁵W. Maclure, I, p. 66.

XI

School Life

The educational prospectus Maclure had produced within less than three weeks after his arrival at New Harmony met with a high degree of acceptance. This was natural, since for the most part it was a compilation of ideas and a review of practices used previously by others, several of whom were members of the new community. Pestalozzi, of course, was the major influence, not only in the area of methodology, but also in the matter of faith in the schools to become self-supporting. Neef, Madame Fretageot, and Phiquepal had all to some degree previously directed their teaching efforts toward putting into practice the educational techniques Maclure espoused in his outline. The spirit of the New Lanark example had, as Maclure stated, been freely drawn upon, which meant the probable support of Robert Owen, his sons, Robert Dale and William, and Joseph Applegarth, who had been in charge of the schools there. In fact, the basic philosophy Maclure outlined was in no way at odds with what had prevailed in the New Harmony educational department prior to his arrival. The only real difference lay in the influx of teachers from whom, as persons steeped in Pestalozzian methodology, the community

expected much greater things than it had experienced from their predecessors. The citizenry was also favorably impressed by the frequent arrival of shipments of Maolure's scientific apparatus and specimens. Naturally, the delivery into this tiny frontier settlement of such sophisticated aids to research also delighted the scientists present.

So morale was initially quite high, with parents supportive of the educational program, and teachers eager to commence the regeneration of society by means of a more natural education. As for the children, unless they had already undergone the sobering experience of enrollment in a more traditional school of the day, they were probably no more and no less eager to participate in the New Harmony program than any other. However, in sharp contrast to what went on elsewhere, there is considerable evidence that school life at New Harmony was on the whole quite an exciting, energetic affair, characterized by the novelty of the unexpected.

Assessing the quality of New Harmony education is made more complicated by the fact that many of those who have left a record of their impressions of it had an easily discernible bias. Thomas Pears, Paul Brown, and F. A. Ismar all complained about the tendency of the children toward unruliness. Pears, who at one point had talked about joining the teaching staff, wrote to a friend his opinion that the manner in which the schools were being conducted was

"really shameful." He complained that very little had been learned by the boys and girls other than "plenty of bad language, disobedience and contempt for their teachers."¹ Paul Brown, in a book he later wrote describing the year he spent in New Harmony, denounced the prevailing educational philosophy of awarding neither praise nor blame, reward or punishment. The result of the experiment--easy to have predicted Brown thought--was that "no other place . . . in the United States . . . had a set of children . . . that were of so harsh, insolent, rash, boisterous, and barberous dispositions."² F. A. Ismar passed his judgment on in the form of a pamphlet addressed to Maclure, who, by the time it was published (1830), had taken up permanent residence in Mexico. Ismar complained of "the most indecent jokes and most vulgar oaths" on the part of the students; and he found their eating habits repulsive.³ However, to take these critics one at a time, Thomas Pears and his wife Sarah revealed in their correspondence an ever increasing

¹ "New Harmony--an Adventure in Happiness: Papers of Thomas and Sarah Pears," ed. Thomas Clinton Pears, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XI, No. 1 (1933), 74.

² Paul Brown, Twelve Months in New Harmony (Cincinnati: William Hall Woodward, 1827), p. 71.

³ F. A. Ismar, The School of Industry at New Harmony, State of Indiana, and Madame Maria Duclos Fretageot: a Letter to Mr. William Maclure (Printed for the author, 1830), p. 10.

dissatisfaction with communal life at New Harmony, and were one of the first families to leave; Paul Brown, a late arrival on the scene, lost no time in establishing himself as Owen's most inveterate critic, and complained about virtually everything; and F. A. Ismar, who had been recruited as a teacher by Maclure in Mexico, was dismissed and banished from New Harmony, accused of being a trouble-maker and a drunken sot. So the credibility of all three men is questionable. Yet on the matter of the children's deportment their complaints do receive qualified substantiation from none other than Robert Owen and William Maclure. Owen admitted that "many of the children were extremely wild, rude, and uncultivated, and strangers who came to see what was going forward could perceive only a babel-like confusion."⁴ And Maclure wrote to Madame Fretageot of the "savage state of the children in Harmony," adding that she was "prudent and wise" to reject as students the girls over fifteen years of age, who might well set "bad examples."⁵ But the assessments of the children's behavior made by Owen and Maclure differ from those of Pears, Brown and Ismar in

⁴New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 33 (May 10, 1826), 262.

⁵"Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 337.

that they were meant to be considered points of reference from which future progress could be measured. Along this line, the Gazette of October 11, 1826 noted that "a steady progress in good habits" and a "substantial improvement among the younger part of the population" was "obvious to everyone." The children had, the article continued, "abandoned their wild and irrational mode of conduct" to such a marked extent that their parents now expressed "the greatest satisfaction in the change effected in their children."⁶

However, the above article was printed just subsequent to yet another re-organization of the community, and at the height of a controversy between Maclure and Owen over the control of educational affairs; therefore, it, too, must be viewed as quite possibly more grounded in propaganda than fact, especially since it went on to claim that "The parents also have made a considerable advance in temperance and industry."⁷ The Gazette of November 8th continued in the same vein, but already the tone is a trifle subdued, the assertions of improvement a bit less strident. It stated: "The children are gradually losing the wild and thoughtless habits which they once possessed, and are beginning to

15. ⁶New Harmony Gazette, II, No. 2 (October 11, 1826),

⁷Ibid.

acquire those of attention and refinement."⁸ That neither Maclure nor Owen, both of whom were only too willing to point with pride to any progress attributable to their educational theories, ever personally recorded any claim of general improvement in student conduct at New Harmony is perhaps the best indication that the problems involved in reconciling permissiveness with respect for the rights of others were no easier to solve then than now.

There is another possible reason why neither Maclure and Owen ever noted any appreciable change for the better in the children's deportment, and never thought of accepting the responsibility of attempting to achieve happier results. Even as they were both sympathetic to the deist philosophy in religion, so they tended to adopt it in the area of social and educational planning. Each seemed to presume that he could play the role assigned to the Creator by the deists, that of providing a plan and the material essential to its implementation, but leaving day to day operations to lesser men. This was especially true in Maclure's case. Although the frequent and prolonged absences of both men have been offered as one of the reasons for the community's failure, Owen did at least remain on the scene from January 12, 1826 till June 1, 1827, and while present he was active

⁸Ibid., II, No. 6 (November 8, 1826), 46.

in community--though not educational--affairs.⁹ As for Maclure, even with factionalism at its peak and conditions at their most disorganized, he apparently felt no constraint to remain on the scene. As early as June 8, 1826, he left on a four month trip through Ohio and Kentucky, returning on October 7, 1826. And only seven weeks after his return, the impending cold weather caused him to repair to New Orleans for his health. He came back to New Harmony on April 20, 1827. This time he stayed until early December, 1827, his longest span of continuous residence in the community. That winter he went to Mexico, where, except for a final visit to New Harmony in 1828, he remained for the rest of his life.

With such a record of absenteeism Maclure could hardly have had in mind the idea of supervising the New Harmony schools in the manner of a Pestalozzi or of a modern day superintendent. As becomes apparent in his voluminous correspondence with Madame Fretageot, he saw himself more as an enlightened patron of education, one who is knowledgeable enough in the field to set down quite specific guidelines under which his beneficences might be enjoyed. He also saw himself as a sage, able to act as a

⁹Owen subsequently revisited New Harmony from early April to June 27, 1828, and again on March 30, 1830 for a few days; and he paid it a final visit in October, 1844.

buffer between the volatile personalities he had collected within his educational department; and, of course, this vision of himself sustained him in his hands-off attitude toward daily educational affairs.

Reminiscences of the students may well be the most accurate yardstick by which to measure the accomplishments of New Harmony schools. The tenor of these accounts suggests that what went on there was not only nothing to be ashamed of, but rather was a fairly consistent example of wholesome treatment of children. One of the major problems, of course, was the implementation of Maclure's dictum that the children be boarded apart from their parents. Though this practice prevailed, apparently the frequency with which children and their parents had contact with each other was subject to wide variation. In one case a parent wrote that his son "comes home on Sunday when we keep him (tho' contrary to rule), and on Wednesday for his clothes." But, on the other hand, a former pupil recalled that she had been allowed to see her father and mother only twice in two years.¹⁰

Aside from being deprived--or as Maclure believed, relieved--of parental care, being boarded out made for rather stark living conditions, though it must be remembered

¹⁰George B. Lockwood, The New Harmony Movement (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1905), p. 246.

that in those days home life was not buffered by a profusion of creature comforts anywhere on the western frontier. Mrs. Sarah Cox Thrall, who was a student in the New Harmony schools, described the girls' wardrobe as being plain, with coarse linen dresses in summer, heavy woolen ones in winter, and a coarse plain outfit for Sundays and special occasions. She remembered that upon arising a detail of the girls was sent out to do the milking, and this milk together with mush cooked in large kettles constituted breakfast, a meal which was expected to be eaten in fifteen minutes. She went on to further reminisce as follows:

We had bread but once a week--on Saturdays. I thought if I ever got out, I would kill myself eating sugar and cake. We marched in military order, after breakfast, to Community House No. 2. I remember that there were blackboards covering one side of the school-room, and that we had wires, with balls on them, by which we familiarized ourselves with lessons in various branches. At dinner we generally had soup, at supper mush and milk again.

We went to bed at sundown in little bunks suspended in rows by cords from the ceiling. Sometimes one of the children at the end of the row would swing back her cradle, and, when it collided on the return bound with the next bunk, it set the whole row bumping together. This was a favorite diversion, and caused the teachers much distress. We had a little song we used to sing:

Number 2 pigs locked up in a pen,
When they get out, it's now and then;
When they get out, they sneak about,
For fear old Neef will find them out.¹¹

Victor Colin Duclos, another student in the New Harmony schools, has left a record of his school days that

¹¹ Ibid.

closely parallels that of Mrs. Thrall in its description of plain clothing, monotonous diet, and tightly scheduled activities:

Our clothing was quite an item with us. The costume of the men and boys consisted of a jacket made quite large, pleated back and front with a band at the waist to which the pantaloons were buttoned. These were made to fit loosely and had no pockets.

For breakfast we had an allowance of one and a half pints of milk, one large spoonful of molasses and as much corn meal mush as we wished. At noon we would have meat and vegetables, for supper we would return to mush and milk. At first we had coffee for breakfast but later Mme. Fretageot thought that was too extravagant, so henceforward we were only allowed coffee Sunday mornings.

The pupils would alternately assist in the kitchen, stirring the mush, preparing the vegetables, washing dishes, etc. also milk the cows and attend to the horses and other stock.

. . . We would study from an early hour, frequently beginning at three a.m. until eight, and from one p.m. to three p.m. The remainder of the mornings and afternoons would be devoted to work at the various trades.¹²

The above sounds pretty grim, but Duclos enlivened his recollections with accounts of personal scrapes and practical jokes played on teachers and classmates; he also acknowledged his high respect for certain teachers,¹³ all of which give the place a refreshing quality. The Duke of Saxe-Weimar, who had no reason to view the communitarian experiment in an especially favorable light, had this to

¹²Victor Colin Duclos, "Diary and Recollections of Victor Colin Duclos," Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), pp. 544, 547.

¹³Ibid., pp. 544-47.

say of his observations of the activities of the New Harmony school children:

All the boys and girls have a very healthy look, are cheerful and lively, and by no means bashful. The boys labour in the field and garden, and were now occupied with new fencing. The girls learn female employments; they were as little oppressed as the boys with labour and teaching; these happy and interesting children were much more employed in making their youth pass as pleasantly as possible.¹⁴

¹⁴Karl Bernhard, "Travels Through North America, During the Years 1825 and 1826," Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), pp. 424-25.

XII

The Faculty

There is a school of thought that argues that method and materials count for little when weighed against the quality of the individual teacher. On the surface this notion goes completely against the grain of Maclure's educational philosophy. He never tired of stumping for the acceptance of Pestalozzian methodology, of insisting that it was the key to educational progress. Yet the staff he collected at New Harmony, whether by chance or subconscious design, was comprised for the most part of individuals far too devoted to a "cult of personality" approach to submit to the confines of any methodology. And accounts of their teaching and the impressions they made on their students go a long way toward proving the importance of the teacher in the educational equation. In his autobiography, Threading My Way, written many years after the experiment had ended, Robert Dale Owen reminisced with obvious delight on the subject of teaching in the community. He freely admitted that although he had initially been eager to pitch in at manual labor, he was greatly relieved at being "invited to take general charge of the school and to aid in editing the

weekly paper," which he found to be "more congenial pursuits than wielding the axe or holding the plough-handles." He had been put in charge of the "School of Adults," which was composed of the eighty or so pupils over twelve years of age. His description of the approach he took in the matter of the discipline of one particular class of boys offers an insight into his faith in the practical application of Pestalozzian disciplinary dogma:

When I first took charge of the school, finding that the teachers occasionally employed corporal punishment, I strictly forbade it. After a time the master of the eldest boys' class said to me one day: 'I find it impossible to control these unruly rascals. They know I am not allowed to flog them, and when I seek to enforce rules of order, they defy me.'

I sought to show him how he might manage them without the rod, but he persisted. 'If you'd try it yourself for a few days, Mr. Owen, you'd find out that I'm right.'

'Good,' I said, 'I'll take them in hand for a week or two.'

They were a rough, boisterous, lawless set; bright enough, quick of observation; capable of learning when they applied themselves, but accustomed to a free swing, and impatient of discipline, to which they had never been subjected. I said to them at the start: 'Boys, I want you to learn; you'll be very sorry when you come to be men if you don't. But you can't learn anything worth knowing without rules to go by. I must have you orderly and obedient. I won't require from you anything unreasonable, and I don't intend to be severe with you. But whatever I tell you to do is what has to be done, and shall be done, sooner or later.' Here I observed on one or two bold faces a smile that looked like incredulity, but all I added was: 'You'll save time if you do it at once.'

My lessons, often oral, interested them, and things went on quietly for a few days. I knew the crisis would come. It did, in this wise. It was May, the thermometer was ranging toward ninety degrees, and I resolved to take the class to bathe in the Wabash, much to their delight. I told them that by the doctor's

advice they were to remain in the water fifteen minutes only; that was the rule. When I called, 'Time's up,' they all came out, somewhat reluctantly, however, except one tall fellow named Ben, a good swimmer, who detained us ten minutes, notwithstanding my order, several times repeated, to come on shore.

I said nothing about it until we returned to the schoolroom, then I asked the class: 'Do you remember my saying to you that whatever I told you to do had to be done sooner or later?' They looked at Ben and said, 'Yes.' Then I went on. 'I am determined that if I take you to bathe again, you shall stay in fifteen minutes only. How do you think I can best manage that?' They looked at Ben again, and seemed puzzled, never, very surely, having been asked such a question before. 'Has no one any plan?' I asked.

At length a youngster suggested: 'I guess you'd better thrash him, Mr. Owen.' 'I don't wish to do that,' I replied. 'I think it does boys harm. Besides, I never was whipped myself, I never whipped anybody, and I know it must be a very unpleasant thing to do. Can't somebody think of a better plan?'

One of the class suggested: 'There's a closet in the garret, with a stout bolt to it--you might shut him up in there till he got back.'

'That's better than flogging, but is the closet dark?'

'Yes.'

'I think Ben would not like to be shut up in the dark for nearly an hour.'

'No, but then we don't like to be kept from bathing just for him.'

Then one little fellow, with some hesitation, put in his word: 'Please, Mr. Owen, wouldn't it do to leave him in the playground?'

'If I could be sure that he would stay there, but he might get out and go bathing, and remain in half an hour, perhaps.'

At this point Ben, no longer able to restrain himself--he had been getting more and more restless, turning first to one speaker, then to another, as we coolly discussed the case--burst forth: 'Mr. Owen, if you leave me in the playground, when they go to bathe next time, I'll never stir from it. I won't. You'll see, I won't!'

'Well, Ben,' said I, 'I have never known you to tell a falsehood and I'll take your word for it this time. But remember, if you lie to me once, I shall never be able to trust you again. We couldn't believe known liars if we were to try.'

So the next time we went in bathing, I left Ben in the playground. When we returned, he met me, with eager face, at the gate. 'I never left, even for a minute. Ask them if I have,' pointing to some boys at play.

'Your word is enough. I believe you.'

Thereafter Ben came out of the water promptly, as soon as time was called; and when any of his comrades lingered he was the first to chide them for disobeying orders.

Once or twice afterward I had to take a somewhat similar stand (never against Ben), persisting each time until I was obeyed. Then, bethinking myself of my Hofwyl experience, I called in the aid of military drill, which the boys took to very kindly, and when three weeks had passed I found that my pupils prided themselves in being what, indeed, they were--the best disciplined and most orderly and law-abiding class in school.¹

In his autobiography, Robert Dale also recorded a vivid portrait of his teaching colleague, Joseph Neef, in action:

Neef . . . had brought with him from Pestalozzi's institution at Iverdum an excellent mode of teaching. To his earlier life, as an officer under Napoleon, was due a blunt, offhand manner and an abrupt style of speech, enforced, now and then, with an oath--an awkward habit for a teacher, which I think he tried ineffectually to get rid of. One day, when I was within hearing, a boy in his class used profane language. 'Youngster,' said Neef to him, 'you mustn't swear. It's silly, and it's vulgar, and it means nothing. Don't let me hear you do so again.'

'But Mr. Neef,' said the boy, hesitating, and looking half frightened, 'if--if it's vulgar and wrong to swear, why--'

'Well, out with it! Never stop when you want to say anything; that's another bad habit. You wished to know why--'

'Why do you swear yourself, Mr. Neef?'

'Because I'm a d----d fool. Don't you be one, too.'²

¹Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way (London: Trubner & Co., 1874), pp. 246-49.

²Ibid., pp. 252-53.

The whole Neef family--father, mother, one son and four daughters--became members of the educational department. Maclure's suggestion to Neef to come at once, leaving his family to come later, was not heeded; but Neef quickly made arrangements to dispose of his farm and to move his entire brood to New Harmony. As soon as they arrived Joseph was given charge of the two hundred or so children, whose ages ranged from five to twelve, with his family assisting him. All of the Neef progeny, as well as Neef's wife, had been exposed to Pestalozzi's training. Apparently the teaching methods of the entire family passed muster, for Madame Fretageot's was the only dissenting voice, and she included Neef himself as a target of her scorn. Against her derogatory opinion must be weighed the favorable judgment of many others. Pestalozzi, Maclure, and Robert Dale Owen held Neef in high esteem; and even so unrelenting a critic as Paul Brown had seen fit to quote Gerard Troost's comment on "'Neef's unprejudiced mind and enlightened mode of teaching.'"³ Karl Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar, could be included as sharing Madame Fretageot's low opinion, but only in regard to Neef's philosophical outlook, not his teaching method. Bernhard, as a member of royalty, naturally did not like the fact that Neef was "still full of the maxims

³Paul Brown, Twelve Months in New Harmony (Cincinnati: William Hall Woodward, 1827), p. 95.

and principles of the French revolution" and "captivated with the system of equality." "Fortunately," Bernhard concluded, "such people stand by themselves, and . . . are so very few in number, that they can do little or no injury."⁴

Thomas Say, termed "the Father of American Zoology,"⁵ was probably the most universally respected member of the educational department. He was, in the words of one of his former pupils, "a fine gentleman, . . . beloved by the whole community."⁶ Even so cynical an observer of the New Harmony scene as Alexander Maclure, William's younger brother, had nothing but praise for Say. On one occasion Alexander wrote to William that so great was his desire to have Say reject all offers to leave the community that he would himself, could he but afford it, "rather pay him 250\$ a year . . . than to loose the Society

⁴Karl Bernhard, "Travels Through North America, During the Years 1825 and 1826," Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), p. 429.

⁵Morris Hillquit, History of Socialism in the United States (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1910), p. 59.

⁶Victor Colin Duclos, "Diary and Recollections of Victor Colin Duclos," Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), p. 547.

of so intelligent and amiable a man as Say is."⁷ Nor was Alexander alone in his high opinion of Say. So well thought of was the latter among fellow-scientists that there was some resentment at his being wasted in New Harmony.⁸ Karl Bernhard added fuel to the fire by attributing Say's presence there to his having "found himself embarrassed in his fortune, and . . . obliged to come . . . as a friend of Mr. M'Clure."⁹

However, this picture of Say as a sort of hostage to Maclure, because of a combination of financial dependence and gratitude, is a distorted one. Say's close association with Maclure stretched back to the Academy of Natural Science in Philadelphia. Over the years from 1817 to 1828, they had made several lengthy exploratory trips together, including one all the way to Mexico. Not only did they share an interest in natural history; in the educational sphere they were in complete agreement that as children they had liked neither their teachers nor what they were taught. They were also agreed that humans ate far too

⁷Letter from Alexander Maclure to William Maclure: October 18, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

⁸J. Percy Moore, "William Maclure--Scientist and Humanitarian," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, LXXXI, No. 3 (1947), 239.

⁹Bernhard, p. 426.

much, and they both committed themselves to a diet so stringent that their contemporaries were convinced that this was the main cause of their eventual ill health. Thus it was not especially shocking that when he absented himself from the community Maclure would entrust his affairs in New Harmony to Say and Madame Fretageot rather than his own brother, Alexander, in whose maturity of judgment he had little faith. More surprising is that Alexander bore no resentment whatever against Say; and even Madame Fretageot had nothing but praise for him. Later, when Maclure had not only left the community for good, but had put Say in charge of his interests there, the scientist did find such responsibility a heavy burden. Having been offered more lucrative positions elsewhere, which his wife encouraged him to accept, Say gave some thought to leaving. But the fact that he did not, that he stayed on in New Harmony until his death in 1834, more than six years after Maclure had visited the village for the last time, indicates that he must have felt stronger ties to the community than mere obligation to Maclure. After all, it was there that he had met and married his erstwhile pupil, Lucy Sistaire. It was there, too, that he was able to vary the lectures he gave in natural history by joining his friend Lesueur in frequent rambles in the nearby woods or on the river, searching for specimens, collecting shells and catching fish which they painted and described. Eventually, with his wife's collab-

oration, and with the help of the noted engraver, Thibaut, who had also joined the community, he produced a much praised six volume work, American Conchology, printed right in New Harmony. All this hardly squares with the idea of talent misused and cut off completely from inspiration.

As for Madame Fretageot, while it was certainly true that "she made devoted friends and equally devoted enemies,"¹⁰ with the latter perhaps in the majority, her reputation as a teacher was good. She was considered an expert mathematician,¹¹ and even her most determined detractor, that "notorious scoundrel" F. A. Ismar,¹² admitted that her pupils "came and went regularly . . . from their lessons and work," and that they were for the most part "under restraint in her presence."¹³ No one except Ismar ever accused her of anything like sloth; she

¹⁰ Caroline Dale Snedeker, The Town of the Fearless (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1931), p. 229.

¹¹ Richard Owen, Brief History of the Social Experiment at New Harmony, Indiana (An original manuscript in the Albert C. Porter Collection. Indiana State Library, Indianapolis), p. 9. See also: Snedeker, p. 229.

¹² Letter from Allen Ward to Achilles Fretageot: July 8, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

¹³ F. A. Ismar, The School of Industry at New Harmony, State of Indiana, and Madame Maria Duclos Fretageot: a Letter to Mr. William Maclure (Printed for the author, 1830), pp. 8, 10.

preferred to keep active, and the range of her teaching duties at New Harmony testifies to her adaptability. For a time she had charge of the infant school, which at the peak of its enrollment numbered over one hundred pupils aged two to five. At the same time she conducted a class for "the handsomest and most polished" of the older girls, such as Lucy Sistaire, all of whom called her "mother."¹⁴ This class met in the two storied brick mansion Maclure had taken over from Rapp. Later she took over a class of older boys, who not only studied but also boarded in the Maclure mansion. And she did some teaching of pupils aged five to twelve. In a letter to Maclure she described a typical day:

I get up at four o'clock regularly and have a class of twelve young men until six-thirty. Breakfast at eight. Nine to eleven, the class of children under twelve. At two, the same children until four. At six, and until eight, all the children above twelve. I leave the piano and go to the kitchen, as I have no cook. The other hours I am occupied looking for the whole family. I may say that I have very little occasion for wearing out the chairs of the house, having not a single female to help me.¹⁵

F. A. Ismar, after his banishment from the community, went to the trouble of publishing a pamphlet titled The

¹⁴Bernhard, p. 432.

¹⁵Nora C. Fretageot, "Extracts from the Letters of Madame Marie Duclos Fretageot," (Compiled in Special Collection in the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana), p. 13.

School of Industry at New Harmony, State of Indiana and
Madame Maria Duclos Fretageot: a Letter to Mr. William
Maclure. Ostensibly intended to open Maclure's eyes to
the truth, it is one long diatribe against the lady in
question. It has generally been discredited because of
the obvious bias and instability of the author, and because
of the complete and indignant rejection of it by its intended
beneficiary, Maclure himself. Be that as it may, some of
Ismar's charges, though unsubstantiated, do have a certain
air of authenticity about them. He accused Madame Fretageot
of failure to provide adequate supervision, especially at
meal times, of allowing the older boys to bully the younger,
and of partiality toward her son, Achilles.¹⁶ But true or
not, such indictments are, or at least were in less enlight-
ened times, virtually endemic to boarding school life.
Maclure was probably therefore justified in summarily
dismissing Ismar's smears as "contrary to all common sense,
reason or rationality."¹⁷

As was the case with Say and Neef, Madame Fretageot

¹⁶ Ismar, pp. 10-11.

¹⁷ Letter from William Maclure to F. A. Ismar: April 10, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana). See also: Letter from George Ewing to William Maclure: September 14, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana); and Letter from George Robertson to an unnamed correspondent [copied and sent to William Maclure]: December 3, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

remained always a person for whom Maclure had the highest regard. He was closely associated with all three in a variety of educational adventures that spanned a long period of time. Each attempt at educational reform in which they collaborated resulted in something far less than what had been hoped for, and none of their various schools achieved anything like permanence. Yet Maclure's faith in these three people, and theirs in him, never eroded. Nor was it blind faith. F. A. Ismar was not the only good samaritan who thought it his duty to inform the absent Maclure of Madame Fretageot's flaws. Martha Chase, who taught in the New Harmony schools, wrote to him in Mexico to advise him that although Ismar had "turned out in fact a great rascal," his attack on Madame's character had been, because of "her extreme avarice, . . . in a great measure justified." According to Mrs. Chase, Ismar's diatribe had delighted the town, for Madame Fretageot was "universally disliked." Mrs. Chase went on to relate a specific charge against Madame, accusing her of "sacrificing" many of Maclure's "valuable productions of Old Masters," determining her prices "according to the size of the paper!" This accusation, however, as is the case with so many others that were bruited about in New Harmony, loses much of its force because of its obvious bias. For the accuser, in the same letter, reported her indignation at having Madame Fretageot refuse her generous offer "to teach the boys

music and drawing in order to purchase twenty dollars worth" of those very paintings she accused Madame of peddling at bargain prices. Thus it is not too surprising that Mrs. Chase found Madame's conduct "not admired in New Harmony," and closed her communication by expressing to Maclure the hope that he did not intend to remain in Mexico all his life as "great good might be done" by his return. Should this prove impractical, however, she felt it her duty--especially since she doubted much that he had been given "correct statements"--to give him "every information" concerning the manner in which his "establishment" and its pupils were being supervised by Madame. If he were "anxious to hear the particulars" of what had transpired during the six months that she had resided in the same house with Madame, he had only to write her "a few lines to that effect." Assuring him that she had "no enmity for any party," she concluded with a postscript instructing him not to attempt to communicate with her through Madame, since she feared "Madame would not inform me if you merely wrote to her."¹⁸

There is no evidence that Maclure ever availed himself of Mrs. Chase's offer to serve as an informer,

¹⁸Letter from Martha Chase to William Maclure: June 1, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

nor would such a course have been at all consistent with his character. Aside from the obvious animus felt by Mrs. Chase toward Madame Fretageot, it was just not Maclure's style to waver in his personal loyalties. And in Madame's case, the following excerpt from a letter Maclure wrote to a friend indicates that he needed no outside assistance in assessing her character:

I rather think your idea of Madame F ever having a wish to return to France is wrong. She has a great share of ambition and wish to rule, which is perfectly gratified by her present situation, having the command of half a town, 30 pupils and others with 8,000 acres of land, settling fast with farmers from all countries. Two or three Professors . . . are jealous of her, and wishing to have her place which they think they could fullfill as well as she; besides two sisters who are not without ambition and think it hard that I would trust anyone [in] preference to them. At first they were her enemies but experience taught them not only they could not manage as she does but that no one else could do as she does; which was mortifying to my Oldest sister. . . . All those who from envy Jealousy or any other cause have taken a dislike to her who . . . at a distance remain still hate her. But all those on the spot who witness what she has done, and is capable of doing, change entirely their opinion.¹⁹

So committed, in fact, was Maclure to his more faithful allies in educational reform that he would on occasion take on the role of peace-maker, trying by communications from a distance to eliminate or at least smooth over abrasive situations between his dear friends. It was to Madame

¹⁹Letter from William Maclure to George W. Ewing: February 20, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

Fretageot that these pacificatory comments were most frequently addressed, either because his correspondence with her was more regular than it was with Say or Neef, or because he realized that she was the most volatile of the three and most in need of placation. During one of his earlier absences from the community he wrote to soothe her, "Tis in you and Neef I have confidence." Then, as her complaints against Neef grew in intensity, he tried to smooth things over to the extent that he found himself defending his friendship with Neef, yet at the same time making apologies for him. He wrote: "Neef is old and stubborn but he's done much good and is still capable of doing much more. You must let Neef take his own way because he is too old to learn."²⁰ But Madame Fretageot was not ready to be put off so easily. In replying to Maclure, she criticized not only Neef, but his progeny as well:

The more I see of Neef the more I am convinced that he is not the man you speak so highly. Let us look and investigate what he has done with his own children. Victor and Louisa have been under his particular care, he says himself that they are the result of his instruction. What result! The former is a dull thoughtless being, the other so fond [fond] of reading novels that she would forget to eat and sleep; both are unfit for their situation. Mina is active, work much but without

²⁰ "Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 358, 387, 389.

principle. When exhausted by an excess of several hours of hard work, she would allow herself to let every thing running down with a perfect quietness untill, her spirit raising again, she begins anew, always with the same thoughtlessness. The others are growing under the very same principle; add to those defects the most vulgar manners and there is the result of Neef's education.

When you say that I shall send Achilles to him to get the foundation of thinking; really it is just as if you were to tell me to send him to the Hindoos to get the knowledge of the Christian religion. Neef himself is the most thoughtless creature that I know; if he had not his wife²¹ he would not have a penny and a shirt for his use.²¹

To the above Maclure could only answer in a placatory vein, admitting that perhaps Neef was "not equal to a great number of pupils," and adding, "I do hope you will go on in perfect harmony and show an example of kindly feeling toward all others." Unfortunately for Maclure's peace of mind, such benign resignation was not in Madame's nature. She never did cease to complain to him about Neef, at one point going so far as to issue an ultimatum that Maclure must choose between her and Neef, with the loser to suffer banishment from the community.²² But Maclure either knew her well enough to ignore her threat, or felt too much loyalty to Neef to act upon it. In any case, Neef stayed on, and so did she.

Charles Alexander Lesueur was another distinguished member of the New Harmony faculty. He had attained consider-

²¹Ibid., pp. 389-90.

²²N. Fretageot, p. 13.

able recognition as an artist in France, and he was also a zoologist of note. Like Say, his presence in the community was directly attributable to Maclure's recruiting efforts. He, too, had accompanied the latter on several scientific explorations. At New Harmony, as he had in Madame Fretageot's school in Philadelphia, he taught drawing and painting. He also pitched in on such community projects as painting scenery for the theatre. However, he, too, came in for criticism from Madame Fretageot, who wrote to Maclure that Lesueur was too much inclined to neglect practical affairs for the collecting and drawing of fish, shells, and birds, pursuits she deemed "all perfectly useless to the happiness of mankind."²³

Still another intellectual ornament in the educational department was Dr. Gerard L. Troost. Troost was also a Maclure recruit, having with Say, Lesueur, and Maclure himself, formed the nucleus of the Academy of Natural Science back in Philadelphia. He was a chemist and geologist. He had been a professor at the Philadelphia Museum and at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, and at New Harmony he taught chemistry. In a letter to Madame Fretageot, Maclure assessed the doctor as follows:

Dr. Troost is a good natured, well meaning man, but his better half has perhaps too many religious prejudices

²³Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 390.

founded on ignorance, which has an immense influence on the actions of any married man at Troost's age.²⁴

For her part, Madame Fretageot found Troost, like Lesueur, too much given to shutting himself up with his research. He was never a member of Maclure's inner circle, and when dissension within the community became too pronounced, he left for a job at Nashville University.

It remained, however, for Phiquepal to serve as the true misfit on Maclure's staff. Robert Dale Owen's unfavorable opinion of him has already been quoted. It has been suggested by one historian that Robert Dale's opinion may have been prejudiced by personal feeling between Phiquepal and himself over matters involving Frances Wright.²⁵ But the indictments against Phiquepal were numerous enough to make this charge unlikely. There was the diatribe of Phiquepal's long-suffering pupil, Achilles Fretageot. And the correspondence between Maclure and Madame Fretageot is full of complaints about Phiquepal, many of which were recorded prior to his defection into the camp of Robert Owen. As early as June 20, 1826, Maclure described Phiquepal as being "full of all extravagant fanceys," and mentioned his reluctance to allow the erratic Frenchman much

²⁴Ibid., p. 339.

²⁵William Randall Waterman, Frances Wright (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 234.

in the way of supplies for fear that he might deprive the schools of their use by capriciously deciding to treat them as his own. On August 21, 1826 Maclure complained of Phiquepal's swollen vanity which rendered him incapable of accepting supervision.²⁶ When Phiquepal, "in a rage,"²⁷ moved his class of eighty boys to a building known as the Steeple House, and cut them off from all intercourse with the rest of the community, both Madame Fretageot and Maclure were furious. Madame Fretageot pronounced him "unfit as a member of our community;"²⁸ and Maclure not only urged both his brother Alexander and Thomas Say "to keep a watch" on Phiquepal's conduct, but went on to castigate him as "the vanest man I ever knew, . . . a dangerous mad man, who can influence so many men . . . to support and indulge him in all his whims and caprices."²⁹ By the time Maclure wrote to Madame Fretageot on February 8, 1827, Phiquepal had come under what Maclure termed "the supposed protection of Mr. Owen," and was apparently engaged in an attempt to de-emphasize, if not totally exclude from the curriculum, the teaching of science. Naturally Maclure's indignation knew

²⁶Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," pp. 339, 357.

²⁷N. Fretageot, p. 13.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 377.

no bounds. To Madame Fretageot he poured out his scorn for both Phiquepal and his "protector," Owen:

I perceive that the madman Phiquepal . . . is worse and worse, and that nothing will satisfy him but the an[ni]hilation of our natural history. . . . His aversion to sciences of which he is perfectly ignorant . . . [would] permit him to destroy the industry of men whose little finger is worth his whole body. In this he is similar to his protector, who won't encourage anything but what he supposes he was the first to practice, and, being totally ignorant of the natural sciences, would obstruct education and destroy it entirely by depriving it of everything usefull and natural.³⁰

On February 24, 1827 Maclure wrote to Madame Fretageot in much the same vein, but took some satisfaction from the fact that now Phiquepal's caprices were Owen's affair, and that Owen would soon rue the day that he took him "on his own pocket." Complaining that he had "reaped nothing but disappointment and the disgrace of spending my money on a madman," Maclure reviewed the negative results of Phiquepal's teaching and posed the rhetorical question, "Is not all his actions as much in contradiction to common sence as to the interest and reputation of the schools?" Asserting that the damage done to his collection of valuable works on natural history by Phiquepal would "require volumes" to relate, Maclure facetiously begged for anyone to tell him of any good that had resulted from his patronage of Phiquepal "as it would be some aleviation to my mortification on being such a fool as to be the dup[e] of such a madman." Describing

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 383-84.

Owen as "a prejudiced person who likes to have his foibles flattered," Maclure viewed the former's attachment to Phiquepal as stemming from that fact. But he was certain that before Owen had known the "madman" long, or had supported his "pecuniary extravagance 1/5 of the time," he would come to share his own opinion of the eccentric Frenchman.³¹

The rest of the school personnel was characterized mainly by its impermanence. Say's wife Lucy taught for a time, as did Maclure's would-be informant, Martha Chase, who, incidentally, was such a beauty that she distracted her male colleagues and the older male students as well. F. A. Ismar lists another six teachers by initials only, all but one of whom, according to him, remained on the faculty only briefly.³² Even so, all things considered, the staff of the New Harmony schools during the years in which Maclure had an influence on its composition was remarkable for the number of persons on it with truly impressive intellectual credentials--especially when it is remembered that in those days such a large portion of the teaching fraternity was comprised of misfits and downright failures.

³¹Ibid., pp. 386-87.

³²F. Ismar, pp. 13-14.

XIII

Separatism

A new curriculum, a new manner of motivation, and new way of life for all pupils--one that involved the elimination of traditional family relationships: nothing less than this was intended in the New Harmony schools. No matter how stable the community might have been, major problems were found to arise in the attempt to put so much revolutionary educational theory into practice so completely and so rapidly. Nor did such things as the nepotistic potential of the educational staff and the penchant of too many of its members to indulge in individual idiosyncrasies improve chances of affecting such vast educational reforms. But what, in the final analysis, sabotaged the educational experiment was not internal squabbles among the educators. Much larger dissensions weakened, then finally sundered the community.

Owen's plan, noted earlier, to shift, by the establishment of a "nucleus," some of the heavy burden of responsibility, both political and financial, from himself to his followers had not succeeded. True, during the final days of March and the entire month of April, 1826, the

community enjoyed a rare period of comparative stability under its new regime; and immigration to the town continued unabated. However, even during this brief era of good feeling there continued to occur the usual spate of mass meetings, and alterations in policy were frequent. Although even the hypercritical Paul Brown admitted that freedom of speech and of the press existed, he went on to complain of the feverish atmosphere that prevailed:

Meetings were held every evening; and often several meetings in a day. There seemed to be a change of measures every week. There was not a vigilant perseverance in practice upon any one adopted process long enough to prove it effectually to be good or bad. Here were restless spirits continually urging some new experiment. The people, instead of employing their thoughts to execute their work well, were musing on plans of new arrangements and changes of new measures in the system of government of the society, the purchase, the contracts, etc..¹

This time the major problem was finally seen as economic rather than political. The "nucleus" tried to get the citizenry to operate according to that noble principle of classic communistic lore: from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs. But, except to those who willfully closed their eyes, the high hopes that Owen's return to the town had engendered only three months before were no longer in evidence--and few were willing to work in that spirit. It was observed by Karl

¹Paul Brown, Twelve Months in New Harmony (Cincinnati: William Hall Woodward, 1827), pp. 16, 18, 25-26.

Bernhard that the work of the community members was now being performed for the most part "as a statutory labor imposed on them . . . , a corvée."² Thomas Pears was a little less severe in his judgment, but he, too, thought that in general the citizenry was far less willing to work for the good of the whole than "they would for themselves."³

To minimize loafing, the "nucleus," borrowing from the sort of thing Owen had used with such success at New Lanark, introduced a system of recording work performed and then ranking individuals "in certain degrees of character according to the number of hours' work that appeared against their names on paper."⁴ As might have been expected, this attempt to equate quantity with quality was not universally accepted, especially by those who were skilled in their craft and realized that their work time was far more valuable to the community than a like amount performed by unskilled workers. Then, too, there was the matter of pace, for as Maclure noted:

One willing workman might do more in an hour than

²Karl Bernhard, "Travels Through North America, During the Years 1825 and 1826," Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), p. 433.

³"New Harmony--an Adventure in Happiness:" Papers of Thomas and Sarah Pears, ed. Thomas Clinton Pears, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XI, No. 1 (1933), 28-29.

⁴Brown, p. 17.

another without the same good will or industry would do in four. The thing most wanted is to protect the industrious, honest members against the unpleasant mortifying sensation of laboring for others that are either unable or unwilling to work their proportion.⁵

What alarmed Maclure even more, however, was a tendency he observed in the citizenry to deny "that those who work with their heads . . . are as productive as those who work with their hands." Growing increasingly uneasy over Owen's blithe optimism in the face of mounting evidence of unrest, extravagance, and wastefulness, he now decided to break his long silence on community affairs. In a letter to the Gazette, published May 17, 1826, he declared himself in complete support of Owen's efforts to establish the principle of "equality in rights and property;" but he then went on to revive in greatly expanded form the once-rejected scheme of the "literati." He suggested the division of the town's population into several different "departments," each consisting of persons engaged in a particular type of work. These various occupational departments would form a federation and would freely exchange the products of their labor. In this way, he argued, labor could be far more realistically apportioned; for the workers would be grouped with their peers into small, homogenous units, in which slackers and laggards would be clearly exposed. More important, the

⁵New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 34 (May 17, 1826), 268.

financial responsibility of each department would only involve paying for the property it actually used, a sum more "within the sphere of the previous habits of calculation" of the members than was the heavy financial burden Owen had shifted--at least in theory--to the shoulders of the "nucleus."⁶

Owen was sufficiently swayed either by the plausibility of Maclure's plan or by the implied threat of the loss of that worthy's financial assistance should his proposition be rejected. He therefore reversed his earlier stand against any further divisions of the community, and on May 28, 1826 asked the citizenry to vote on one of two alternatives: (1) to have one community with different departments based on occupation, each having its own set of officers; or (2) to have four separate societies.

The latter plan won out, thereby launching the community upon its third reorganization in less than five months. Only three societies were actually established, the projected fourth evaporating in the process of combination. These were: the Educational Society; the Agricultural and Pastoral Society; and the Mechanic and Manufacturing Society. Of the three, the Education Society was the only one brought into existence with relative ease. Its member-

⁶Ibid.

ship was readily defined, and it was assured of Maclure's financial backing. In marked contrast to the other two societies, which each took almost two months to form, the Education Society came into being within ten days from the time the result of the vote to reorganize was made known. A lease was drawn up between Owen and Maclure--the first actual written agreement between the two men--by which Owen sold Maclure for \$49,000.00 a ten thousand year lease to nine hundred acres of land and several buildings, including New Harmony Hall (formerly the Rappites' brick church), Steeple House (the Rappites' wooden church), Rapp's mansion (in which Maclure already was living), Community House No. 2 (where the boarding school was situated), and the granary. Maclure immediately paid Owen half of the total sum due, and by January, 1827, he had paid him a total of \$38,000.00, even though the payments had been originally arranged to be made over a seven year span.

The two philanthropists finally had something down in black and white, but subsequent events made clear that no real meeting of the minds had taken place. Owen found it convenient to persist in the belief that he and Maclure were full partners in all phases of the New Harmony experiment, and that the newly drawn lease was a mere formality. Maclure, however, accepted no such interpretation of their relationship. He took the position that, except for his earlier informal understanding with Owen, under which he

had agreed to accept liability for half of the latter's losses up to a maximum of \$10,000.00, his financial commitment was limited to the terms of the lease he had just signed.

Although the three newly formed societies were bound together by a Board of Union, and traded with one another by means of labor notes, the fundamental economic dilemma--that the citizenry as a whole, however grouped, produced less than it consumed--remained unsolved. If anything, the problem was magnified. Previously the store had been part of the community, and accounts had been so manipulated as to balance individual members' allotments and wages with their withdrawals. So, too, had the tavern, by earning a steady cash profit, been a solid community asset. Under the new arrangement Owen retained ownership of both the store and the tavern. None of the newly formed societies had a shadow of a claim to either property, but Owen was immediately accused of degenerating "into the character of a retailer and tavern keeper, to save . . . after the manner of pedlars, the money which he had lost."⁷ Though such a prudent course of action might well have given the already highly skeptical Maclure a shred of reassurance that his partner had retained at least some semblance of the

⁷Brown, p. 24.

business acumen that had made him his fortune, Owen quickly succumbed to the malcontents' pressure. To appease his denigrators, he gave the Mechanic and Manufacturing Society a half interest in the store, and he turned the tavern over to the Agricultural and Pastoral Society. The latter organization immediately made clear that the collective indignation expressed over his suspected relapse into the role of greedy capitalist was capable of considerable modification to suit changed circumstances--it raised the tavern rates for room and board fifty per cent!

Owen's gesture of good faith may have momentarily blunted suspicion of his personal motives, but it did little to dull the cutting edge of divisiveness. The three newly formed societies quickly found occasion to quarrel over their boundaries. Disputed areas fell into complete neglect, the crops within them going unattended. Although as recently as May 9, 1826 Owen had delivered a speech at New Harmony Hall, in which he reviewed in the most favorable terms all that had transpired to date, during that summer his followers--and the absent Maclure--became increasingly unhappy with his philosophic generalities and his brightly painted word pictures of the soon-to-be. The Gazette proved itself no mere house organ by publishing a volley of practical questions one of the bolder citizens, who signed himself "A Member of the Community," now presumed

to fire at the founding father. Exactly what was to stimulate individuals to superior industry? What means were going to be adopted to reform the idle, the petulant, the proud, the vicious, the intemperate, the libertine, etc.? If promotion and expulsion were to be utilized, were they not rewards and punishments? What were to be the legal arrangements by which the community might hold its property jointly, yet not come into conflict with the laws of the land? How was money, so necessary to all business transactions with the outside world, to be rendered obsolete? When would the people of New Harmony get to view the scale model of the community of the future that Owen had so proudly displayed to the United States Congress--to say nothing of the real thing? And why its particular shape? Who was to pay the cost of the building of such a "palace?"⁸

Owen, by intimating that such minor details were not important to the success of his great plan, cannot have done much to appease his growing army of critics. Nor was he the sole source of dissatisfaction. Members of the different societies kept changing places and joining one of the others. Even so, at least according to dour Paul Brown, "The people of this town continued strangers to each

⁸New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 37 (June 7, 1826), 294.

other in spite of all their meetings, their balls, their concerts . . . and all their pretense of cooperation."⁹

Against Brown's claim of so much internal dissension must be set the reminiscences of Robert Dale Owen. Although Robert Dale freely admitted that while at New Harmony he had "looked at everything with eyes of enthusiasm," he went on to add that he had found life there "wonderfully pleasant and hopeful," and he had delighted in "the good fellowship and in the absence of conventionalism" that had characterized the place. He remembered:

There was something especially taking, to me, at least, in the absolute freedom from all trammels, alike in the expression of opinion, in dress, and in social intercourse, which I found there. The evening gatherings, too, delighted me; the weekly meetings for the discussion of our principles, in which I took part at once. The weekly concert, with an excellent leader, Josiah Warren, and a performance of music, instrumental and vocal, much beyond what I had expected in the backwoods; last, but not least, the weekly ball, where I found crowds of young people, bright and genial, if not especially cultivated, and as passionately fond of dancing as in those days I myself was.

Naturally enough, under the circumstances, I was not haunted by doubts as to the success of the social experiment in which we were engaged. The inhabitants seemed to me friendly and well disposed. There was much originality of character.¹⁰

On balance, Brown's jaundiced view of the prevailing social climate was probably more accurate than was young

⁹Brown, p. 33.

¹⁰Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way (London: Trubner & Co., 1874), pp. 244-45.

Robert Dale's romanticized one. Certainly the former's testimony is given added credence by a list of "considerations" that was published in the Gazette. Intended by the editorial staff to serve as a guide for those who desired "to unite under the new social system," these "considerations" had about them an explicit quality that strongly suggests they may well have referred to existing evils. They warned of the necessity "to sink, completely, individual interests," so that all could "live together as one family, upon a footing of complete equality." All idea of the use of force "in convincing . . . human judgment" had to be put aside. "No abuse, brawling, or loud talking" were to be practiced, nor was there to be any "grumbling, carping, or murmuring against any individual for neglect of duty." Even those who had "acquired habits of intemperance" were not to be "disturbed by abuse." In the matter of meal taking no "distinction or preference" as to suitable arrangements were to exist among the members; and all children, without exception, were to be excluded from the public room during meals. Habits of neatness and cleanliness were deemed well worth the effort. "Anger and irritation" were not to be displayed toward the female members of the community because of "their aversion to . . . the work of mutual cooperation," and their tendency to "brawl or quarrel and talk aloud." In all matters regarding the affairs of

the community, the members were advised to "meet together as children of one family," avoiding "parties, votes, and disputes, . . . mysteries or underhand dealings." Instead of such skullduggery there should be "sincerity, plain, open and above board," with "everything . . . done in united concert for the good of the whole." And perhaps even more meaningful than the long list of specific strictures the considerations contained, was the threat, however gloved in velvet, that was also part of their content. For mention was made that "the interest of the community" might require the "dismissal" of those individuals so deficient in judgment as to render themselves unfit to continue as members. True, they were to be sent away "in the spirit of kindness," but just how this was to be accomplished was not gone into in detail.¹¹

¹¹New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 30 (April 19, 1826), 238-39.

XIV

Subsidization Opposed

The "considerations" listed in the Gazette strongly hinted at a growing sense of disillusionment on the part of the more idealistic element of New Harmony's population, an attitude fully shared by Maclure, who was daily developing a more and more jaundiced opinion of both the community and its founder. Even so,--perhaps in part because of the fact--a mere ten days after Owen had publicly acquiesced in his proposal that the community be divided along occupational lines, Maclure decided to take off on a four month trip through Ohio and Kentucky. Accompanied by Thomas Say, he planned to combine nature study with an inspection tour of a couple of Owenite communities. The two men left New Harmony on June 8, 1826.

Only a day later, from the nearby town of Mount Vernon, Maclure wrote to Madame Fretageot the first of a series of letters he was to write to her during his trip. Dated June 9, 1826, it was a somewhat strange document, for it revealed that despite the reorganization he himself had so recently suggested, he had already begun to despair of the possibility of any "progress." He feared the whole

experiment was "no easy task, particularly . . . Mr. O's part of it." "Everything," he added, "I have heard since I left Harmony diminishes the little confidence I had in the materials he has to work upon." Nor was sympathy the only emotion Maclure felt where Owen was concerned. He was becoming increasingly nervous about the financial implications of Owen's apparently limitless optimism; so much so that he asked Madame Fretageot to attempt to "caution Mr. O. against spending much more money upon his present population." He also told her to warn Owen "not to join my name in any of the Bonds he may take, as all my property is devoted to schools as the only way of benefiting mankind." Trying to end the letter on a positive note, Maclure expressed his hope that the community would practice "true friendly and fellow feeling toward all the others and give them an example of what ought to exist in the social order;" but he could not resist adding that he had "not the smallest idea" that the citizenry would "for many years be sufficiently enlightened" to perform in such a manner.¹

The letter does not reflect credit upon Maclure. Written so soon after his departure from New Harmony, it would seem to indicate an aversion on his part to a direct

¹"Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 337-38.

confrontation with Owen. Instead he clearly wanted to have Madame Fretageot take up the cudgel in his behalf. Nor was she too wise a choice, not only because it meant the unnecessary involvement of an intermediary between the two principals, but also because, as developments were to reveal, she was still pretty much under Owen's spell. Finally, the "everything" Maclure claimed to have heard in the one day he had been away from the town could hardly have so drastically diminished his confidence in its citizens--had he not already been thoroughly disillusioned with them.

Maclure's next letter to Madame Fretageot, dated June 20, 1826, contained several more references to Owen's lack of financial prudence, asserting that the latter had "done nothing in this country but by the power of money," and that once deprived of it his influence would be "trifflingly small." Already, in Maclure's opinion, the "heterogenous materials" that made up the population of New Harmony had been "spoiled . . . by the force of money," and had "produced nothing but waste and destruction of property."²

Owen's "loose and incorrect mode of doing business" became more and more a topic of Maclure's letters. On

²Ibid., p. 339.

July 9, 1826 he wrote of having disapproved of all of "Mr. O's money operations," but of having been told by Owen that unless he were allowed his way he could not act. On July 21, 1826 he prophetically noted that Owen's last hope "to regain part of what he has lost" lay in keeping the community store and tavern in his own hands. In a letter dated July 31, 1826 he repeated his contention that Owen's "great error" lay in "thinking to produce a revolution by money," and added his belief that such a change could "only be effected by the slow and snail paced conviction of the multitude." Another mistake for which he took Owen to task was his continued faith in the eventual assistance of the non-productive class. Maclure deemed it "the height of absurdity" to imagine that any plan to meliorate the plight of the masses could possibly gain "the countenance or support of any of the influential part of society." Instead of help, he warned, "It would be the greatest imprudence not to expect every opposition, persecution and detraction that ingenuity can invent."³

The remarks quoted above make obvious Maclure's deepening suspicion that Owen had completely lost touch with practical considerations. That his suspicions were founded in fact was clearly illustrated by Owen's famous

³Ibid., pp. 342-44.

"Oration Containing a Declaration of Mental Independence," which he delivered at New Harmony Hall on July 4, 1826. Apparently growing restless with the limited scope of the New Harmony challenge, Owen chose the occasion to launch an attack upon a rather formidable trio of institutions: private property, organized religion, and marriage! "Man," Owen announced, "up to this hour has been, in all parts of the earth, a slave" to this trinity of "monstrous evils" that had "combined to inflict mental and physical evil upon his whole race." The situation called for a "revolution," Owen declared, one that would result in "the destruction of this Hydra of Evils--in order that the many may be no longer poor, wretched beings--dependent on the wealthy and powerful few; that man may no longer be a superstitious idiot."⁴

Owen had assumed that his "Declaration of Mental Independence" would attract considerable attention, and on this score he was certainly proved correct. However, it is hard to imagine how he could have been more wrong in thinking that this sensationally iconoclastic message would be well received. Yet he was so convinced of the power and logic of his message that he claimed:

This Truth has passed from me, beyond the possibility of recall: it has been already received into your minds: speedily it will be heard throughout America, and from

⁴New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 42 (July 12, 1826), 330-31.

thence it will pass North and South, East and West, as far as language is known,--and almost as fast as it shall be conveyed, human nature will recognize and receive it. In countries, in which ignorance and despotism hold their sway over the multitude, arts will be used to keep it from being heard among them: but neither armies, nor barriers of any kind, can now prevent a great and important truth from finding its way, by some means or another, into the darkest recesses of error and deception.

Rejoice, then, with me, my friends, that this light is now set upon a hill; for it will increase daily, more and more, until it shall be seen, felt, and understood, by all the nations of the earth.⁵

What Owen actually achieved in addition to the publicity he sought for his "truth" was a solidifying of hostile opinion toward the New Harmony experiment. The tendency on the part of the outside world to stereotype the town's inhabitants as a bunch of lazy, greedy atheists, dedicated to the practice of free love, was both accelerated and magnified. Maclure, however, was in this instance so much in sympathy with the tenor of Owen's remarks that at first he failed to consider the consequences they portended. On August 2, 1826, having read a published account of the speech, he wrote to Madame Fretageot praising it as "all true and told in a masterly manner." But already his better judgment warned him that it might better have been "deferred . . . to allow a little more time for the flambeau of reason to throw light into the dark corner of society." And further along in the same letter he noted the possible adverse effect

⁵Ibid., p. 331.

the speech might have on the recruitment of pupils from outside the community. But he thought this could be countered by having the Education Society state as its position that "the discourse contains only the private opinions of Mr. Owen and that the schools are independent of him and teach no species of religion, leaving the minds of youth a piece of blank paper on which their priests or parents may write what they please. . . ."⁶

Maclure soon discovered that he had greatly underestimated the public furor Owen's remarks would generate. By September 20, 1826 he deemed it prudent not only to insist that he had in no way endorsed Owen's attack on the "trinity of evils," but also to imply that he had actually tried to dissuade him from speaking out. Writing to a friend, who later furnished the newspapers with excerpts from the letter, Maclure claimed:

I did all I could to bridle the impetuosity of the enthusiastic reformer. But, after all, what have the three positions to do with the co-operative system? not quite so much as fungus that grows at the root of a tree, has with the health or prosperity of the tree. They are the opinions of one individual, Mr. Owen, who is, perhaps, the only one within five hundred miles of him, who thinks them fit or necessary in the present state of society, and have no more effect on the inhabitants of New Harmony, than they have upon the citizens of Philadelphia.--Mr. Owen in all his speculative opinions is no more to the communities of Harmony, than

⁶Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," pp. 346-47.

the opinions of any other individual that would take the same pains to communicate them.⁷

Of all the charges that Owen's speech had brought down upon the community's head, the one that rankled Maclure the most was the one he termed "that pivot of all the lyes [lies]"--the rumor of sexual licentiousness. It prompted yet another letter written in defense of the community's morals, in which Maclure found himself insisting that he had found the morality of the inhabitants of New Harmony "more correct" than that in any other part of the world he had ever visited in his extensive travels. He went on to mention the town's sobriety, order, and friendliness, and to contrast "the simplicity, innocence and moral conduct" of New Harmony with "the extravagance, debauchery and vice of New York and the other large towns of the Union. . . ."⁸

Owen's Independence Day outburst had resulted in Maclure's feeling himself compelled to come forward to endorse the moral character of the inhabitants of New Harmony--a most untenable and uncomfortable role for him to assume. Had he not already expressed his lack of confidence in that wasteful and destructive populace, totally spoiled by Owen's generosity? And even as he publicly

⁷ Ibid., p. 347.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 348-49.

praised the community's morals, he admitted to Madame Fretageot his private opinion that from three-fourths to nine-tenths of its citizens were "good for nothing" and were positively "injurious to the community system." However, he continued to insist that he bore no resentment whatsoever against Owen, even though the latter had seriously compromised his right to air his true feelings regarding the New Harmonians. On the contrary, he assured Madame Fretageot, there was "not the smallest difference" between Owen and himself.⁹

While Maclure may not have been overly annoyed at having been forced into playing games with the truth as a result of Owen's misplaced zeal, he was becoming more and more aggravated by what he felt were foolish efforts on Owen's part to subsidize the experiment. For Maclure had evolved a theory, one that would tidily solve the problem of cutting off the disastrous flow of subsidies--without the necessity of having to admit that communitarianism as such was a failure. One of the reasons he had taken leave of New Harmony in June, 1826, had been to inspect and possibly even to supply funds of his own to the Owenite community located at Yellow Springs, Ohio. This community, situated on a heavily mortgaged farm, had been set up without any financial assistance from Owen, though he had

⁹Ibid., pp. 346, 350, 377.

avored the settlement with a visit. Whatever conditions were like during Owen's brief stay, by the time Maclure arrived antagonisms ran so deep that he saw no chance for the experiment to succeed. In spite of his growing suspicion that providing financial help to communitarians was actually to do them a disservice, Maclure did in the end decide to lend the Yellow Springs Community \$4,000.00. He was saved, however, from thus acting contrary to his convictions by the sudden demise of the community. Somehow this experience, coming on top of what he had witnessed at New Harmony, helped him shape his hypothesis, which was basically the "stake in society" theme, but with an added twist of irony involved. His earlier conviction that the members of the New Harmony experiment had been spoiled beyond redemption by the force of Owen's money had hinted at the trend of his thoughts. It is difficult to understand just why the Yellow Springs situation should have re-enforced his opinion that subsidization was such a corrupting influence, for that community, unlike New Harmony, had received no financial aid whatsoever. Yet somehow he arrived at his conclusion; and he wrote to Madame Fretageot that what he had seen confirmed his hypothesis that "industry alone can make the system succeed," and that Owen's largess had "spoiled all the members of the prelim-

inary society."¹⁰

Later, in an essay on education that appeared in the New Harmony Gazette of October 24, 1827, Maclure expressed in expanded form his thoughts on the subject of subsidization. He argued that the main reason why no communitarian experiments had as yet succeeded was that "supporters" of such experiments had heretofore always come from a "class that had not any pecuniary interest in their success." It was not simply that these "supporters" were in such a position that their motivation was limited to the derivation of "moral gratification." The real difficulty was that such high-minded altruism was "scarcely within the comprehension of the great mass of productive laborers," the very people for whom these unselfish efforts were being made. This inability on the part of the productive laborers to understand the purity of motive behind such philanthropic gestures had led in turn to unwarranted suspicion on the part of the very group intended to be aided. The productive masses, "not seeing how it was possible for any one in his right senses to spend his money in endeavoring to do good to others," became so obsessed with putting each would-be benefactor's "invention . . . perpetually on the rack to find out how he was to gain by it," that there was scant possibility of true cooperative effort. The net

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 339, 350.

result had in every instance been that "all those who have attempted to help with pecuniary aid have lost their labor and their money through the defect in the optics of those who were to gain by it." There was only one possible conclusion, thought Maclure: philanthropic subsidies were self-defeating. The solution was for the masses to learn self-reliance, which could best be accomplished through emphasis on a more practical education. Only then, thought Maclure, would the communitarian system, supported solely by the unsubsidized efforts of the producers themselves, be "brought to that useful perfection of which its nature is capable."¹¹

This line of reasoning had to lead Maclure into another area of ideological conflict with Robert Owen. For the New Harmony and Yellow Springs examples had convinced Maclure that not only was money spent on subsidizing communities a harmful waste, but also that any efforts made to educate the adult population were equally futile. Disgusted by the failure of the adult members of each community to cast aside their "ignorance and prejudices," Maclure wrote of having so completely "lost the little confidence I had in adults or parents that I believe no good system of education can have a fair tryal but with orphans"--since only

¹¹ New Harmony Gazette, III, No. 3 (October 24, 1827), 20.

they were young enough not to have been corrupted by their parents.¹²

¹²Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," pp. 350-51.

XV

The Tuition Crisis

In practical terms, Maclure's disapproval of philanthropic schemes involving subsidization of adults had to make him increasingly unsympathetic to any all-encompassing regenerative plans for the New Harmony community. As his effort to establish the Education Society as a separate entity had indicated, he wanted to so narrow his interest in the community as to confine it solely to that organization; and every new piece of evidence of dissension, sloth, or greed that came to his attention further hardened him in his resolve. Owen, on the other hand, saw this tendency toward exclusiveness as divisive, but found himself unable to reverse the trend. Matters came to a head while Maclure was still away. In line with Maclure's idea that each of the newly formed occupational societies should establish its affairs on the basis of self-sufficiency, it was decided by its members that the Education Society must, of course, charge tuition in exchange for its services. This seemed logical, since those who constituted its membership were no longer automatically entitled to share in what was produced by the

agricultural and manufacturing societies. But the disinclination Maclure had noticed on the part of many New Harmonians to grant sufficient value to educational services now came into play. When Robert Dale Owen, who had been made superintendent of the schools, announced in public that in order for the Education Society "to exist," tuition must be paid by the other societies' children, his demand was rejected. It was reported by Paul Brown that the Agricultural Society "determined to withdraw their children from the boarding school," but were at least willing to pay for the time they had been enrolled. And the response of the Mechanical Society was even more disappointing: they "refused to pay at all, and thenceforth their children were considered as withdrawn, and their attendance stopped."¹

On August 11, 1826, Madame Fretageot wrote to Maclure to inform him of these ominous developments. The Education Society had, she informed him, found it necessary to return "the children of the Communities' Mecanics and farmer[s] to their parents." But this had not, of course, alleviated the problem that had led to such drastic action. For the entire membership of the Education Society continued to be "occupied exclusively" at working in the schools, "without

¹Paul Brown, Twelve Months in New Harmony (Cincinnati: William Hall Woodward, 1817), pp. 34-36.

any return either in money or good[s] from the said communities." Now the number of children whose parents were "willing to pay their pension" had shrunk to "about 80."²

Then, to add to Maclure's headaches, in the same letter Madame Fretageot saw fit to harangue several of her colleagues in the Education Society. Under Neef's direction, she charged, the children "were making progress in every kind of bad habit;" and she accused Neef's wife of "poor management" of her duties as a housekeeper. But it was for Phiquepal that Madame saved her greatest scorn. As far as she was concerned, his refusal to send three of the four boys he had brought with him from France to join the rest of the boys over twelve, who had been placed under Robert Dale Owen's direction, was an act that struck at the very roots of the concept of equality, the central position upon which the community had been founded. Nor, she reported to Maclure, had she hesitated to tell Phiquepal that in a "community of equality" such a show of favoritism was singularly inappropriate, and had added that he suffered from a sick mind. Whereupon Phiquepal, hardly the type to accept such criticism from his former aide with equanimity, flew into what Madame quaintly termed a "violent aller of

² "Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 351-52.

passion," in which he abused her "with his tongue as much as he could;" and not satisfied with rebutting her in private, he repaired to the tavern, where "he continued on the same topic," with the mortifying result that he so "frightened" fellow members of the Education Society that they had agreed to allow the boys involved to remain under his tutelage.³

Nor was that all the bad news Madame had to reveal to Maclure. She was "really sorry" that Joseph Applegarth, one of the few teaching colleagues whom she had respected as "a man of buseness and activity," had decided to depart. His decision, she felt, was due to his disillusionment. Had he been better acquainted "with all the thousand obstacles that ignorance throws in the way" of enlightened progress, "he would have calculated them beforehand and not be disturbed in meeting them." Yet even she, though personally prepared for the worst, could not help pleading with Maclure that his presence on the scene was increasingly necessary.⁴

On the same day that Madame Fretageot wrote to Maclure to describe some of the "thousand obstacles" confronting the experiment, he had written to her in equally disillusioned terms. He had learned of Owen's giving way

³Ibid., p. 352.

⁴Ibid., p. 353.

to his critics in the matter of the store and the tavern, and he thought such generosity to be foolish, if not downright harmful. Maclure was aware that the Mechanical Society was "very dissatisfied because Mr. Owen did not give them the whole of the store in place of the half;" but he felt that in giving them half Owen had only "given them what will prevent them from doing any thing for themselves untill they have spent the whole." He saw the surrender of the tavern to the "pastorals" in the same light, as "a bonus to try to satisfy them;" and he predicted that both gestures would "most probably fail . . . completely," as had all of Owen's previous "attempts to benifit the hetrogenus mass he has gathered together."⁵

That Maclure felt no personal sense of involvement in these decisions of Owen's was made obvious by his admission to Madame Fretageot that Owen had the "right to do with his own property as he pleases." Yet Maclure could not "help mentioning" his dismay at seeing "a friend per-servering in throwing away his property." He would be "glad" if events proved him a "false prophet," but he greatly feared that Owen should have kent both the tavern and the store in his own hands "as a check upon the avarice of the speculative mass he has had to deal with. . . ." He was afraid that Owen

⁵Ibid., p. 354.

was preaching "to the winds," and that the citizenry of New Harmony would only "hear him and flatter him as long as they can get money from him."⁶ [All of this lends credence to Maclure's claim that his own financial obligations were limited by oral agreement with Owen to a \$10,000.00 "forfeiture." So does the fact that these examples of Owen's philanthropic profligacy took place while Maclure was absent from New Harmony, and without any attempt on Owen's part to solicit Maclure's opinion or consent to either transaction.]

Though he was still able to view Owen's generosity in a somewhat detached manner, Maclure felt it necessary to once more make the point to Madame Fretageot that his own commitments were solely to the Education Society. He promised to do all he could "for the success of the Schools;" but he warned her of the "necessity" of "having little to do with the other two communities but to give a good education to their children and get in return what is necessary to keep up the establishment."⁷ In other words, the Education Society was to be operated on a self-sustaining basis. All of which was easier said than done, especially since the Agricultural and Mechanical Societies had already refused

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 354.

to pay the tuition costs essential to the achievement of such self-sufficiency. Of course, when he penned the above remarks Maclure knew nothing of this unfortunate complication. Yet when he did learn of the mass withdrawals that had reduced enrollment to a mere one-fourth of what it had been, he did not despair. The news only served to harden his conviction that adults were, by virtue of the flawed environment in which they had been reared, beyond redemption, and also strengthened his resolve to limit his philanthropic efforts solely to the affairs of the Education Society.⁸

There was another matter concerning Owen that plagued Maclure, and in this case he felt compelled to come to the former's defense. It had come to Maclure's attention that many of the wives of those families who had already departed from New Harmony were publicizing as reason for their withdrawal "the freedom that Mr. O. took with them," claiming, Maclure sarcastically noted, "they could not think of remaining under such dreadful risk of their virtue." Nothing angered him more than this sort of rumor. He railed against those "lies that are circulating" which were making New Harmony "the scape goat of the whole western country." As he saw it, things

⁸Ibid., pp. 357-58, 362, 365-66.

were in a sad state, with "the ennemies . . . enthousiastically industrious in inventing all kinds of falsehoods," while "the great mass," in whose benefit the experiment had been undertaken, remained indifferent, "drowned in whiskey, with the torpor and apathy of Chinese."⁹

Obviously at this point Maclure still considered himself on fairly good terms with Owen. True, he believed Owen to be much too sanguine about the prospect for reforming society in the near future, and he was appalled by Owen's lack of financial restraint. But he saw Owen as a man of good will, as someone too unselfish for his own good. This view of Owen was, however, soon to alter. For Owen, when confronted by the mass exodus from the educational program of the children of the members of the Agricultural and Mechanical Societies, reacted in such a way as to cause what turned out to be an irreparable breach between himself and Maclure. Instead of admitting the essential reasonableness of the educators' argument that their services were as much a commodity as were the material products created by the other two societies, and trying to effect some sort of agreement on a fair rate of tuition, Owen chose a course of action that had to lead to trouble with his absent partner. In an address delivered in New Harmony Hall on August 6,

⁹Ibid., p. 355.

1826 on the subject of education, Owen not only hinted at the failure of the Education Society to live up to his "high expectations," but warned that unless all of the children were provided with "the education which the new system requires," he intended to himself furnish "such aids and assistance as may be needed." He tried to mitigate the effect these words were certain to have on Maclure by stating that it had been due to his "deeming . . . education to be the most important department in the whole business of human life and society" that he had become "connected . . . with Mr. Maclure." He then described Maclure as a man who had long interested himself upon the subject of education, and who had expended large sums in bringing the best teachers he could find in Europe to the United States. These teachers, Owen further conceded, together with "others belonging to this country," Maclure had "brought with him" to New Harmony. But, Owen added, while he was "most desirous" that the educators assembled by Maclure should have "the fairest chance of exhibiting, each in his own way, what they can accomplish by their respective plans of school education," he was not sure whether he would be "disappointed or not" by their performance. Although "sure" that they would "exert themselves to the uttermost to succeed," Owen promised his audience that evidence of failure or falling short on the

part of the educators meant his personal intervention.¹⁰

Since most of those assembled to hear Owen speak had already voted to cut their children off from the Education Society's schools, his remarks could only have served to make them feel that they had done the right thing. Obviously, since their children were not to receive any education elsewhere, Owen would have to provide the "aid and assistance" he promised. Best of all, it sounded as if it would be free. A careful reading of Owen's speech indicates that he may have actually intended his remarks to be somewhat placatory. For he had, in the same speech in which he expressed his doubts of the educators' competency, rebuked the parents for setting bad examples for their children, and for indulging in "practices . . . much opposed to a good education;" and he had also insisted that "no one could be really well educated in a private family."¹¹ All of which suggests that he may have hoped to see the community's children re-enrolled in the boarding schools. But, whatever his intentions, he certainly was guilty of meddling in an area in which he had promised Maclure he would not interfere; and no other course of action could have been better calculated to produce in Maclure the determination to achieve a complete break with him as quickly as possible.

¹⁰New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 46 (August 9, 1826), 367.

¹¹Ibid.

XVI

Community Education

Upon learning of the contents of Robert Owen's speech of August 6, 1826, in which he had cast vague aspersions upon the community's educators, Maclure was naturally incensed. He wrote at once to Madame Fretageot requesting that she kindly no longer mention Owen as his partner since he had "not the smallest connection" with anything Owen had done. "Every purchase or sale" made by the latter, Maclure continued, had been made either against his will or without his knowledge. Hence he would not for a moment consider himself "responsible." He wanted it clearly understood that from the first of Owen's "operations" onward, he had never approved of their "mode of execution."¹

As Maclure saw the situation, the only possible course of action was to "have nothing further to do with the business except the schools," whose well-being he was ready to "push to the utmost extent." "They shall," he promised Madame Fretageot, "be supported by all my property." Nor was she to be dismayed by the mass withdrawals from the

¹"Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 356-57.

schools of the children of the Agricultural and Mechanical Societies. If the children of those two communities were no longer to be pupils in the schools of the Education Society, other children would be found to take their place. The only essential condition was that the schools must be kept independent of Owen's "metaphysics."²

So great was Maclure's agitation that he wrote Madame Fretageot yet another letter on the same day. In this second missive he went even further in his protestations that his affairs must not be considered intertwined with those of Owen. He once more urged her to intercede for him in his financial relations with Owen; he wanted Owen told that he was not to "trust to receive any more from me" than payment for the property of the Education Society--and even that sum would only be paid "when a good and sufficient title is given." This did not mean, however, Maclure assured Madame, that he had changed his "good opinion of the Community system." What had "totally changed" was his opinion of "Mr. Owen's capability to succeed in any undertaking." "However willing," Maclure went on, "I might be to spend my money on my own educational visions, I'm positively determined to waste none of it on the visions of others,"--especially on schemes involving the redemption of

²Ibid., p. 357.

"grown persons."³

Maclure chided Madame for being "convinced that nothing will go well but under the immediate management of Mr. Owen." How, he argued, could this be so, when Owen "puts all out of his management by giving the store and tavern to others?" But none of this, Maclure admitted, was really any of his business. Owen was free to do as he pleased with his own money just as long as he fully understood that he could not possibly expect any more from him than payment for the property of the Education Society. Maclure closed his letter by warning Madame that not only was Owen "in too great a hurry," but also that the latter's recent speech on education had "some further object," which he admitted he could not "at present fathom."⁴

This was a shrewd guess on Maclure's part. For on August 13, 1826, unknown to Maclure when he wrote the letter quoted above, Owen had again returned to the New Harmony Hall podium to speak further on the topic of education. Addressing an audience described by the Gazette as "large and attentive," he proceeded to outline in very general terms what he considered to be the rudiments of "a Superior Education." This was quickly followed by the assurance that

³Ibid., p. 358.

⁴Ibid., pp. 358-59.

should the plan he had in mind to disseminate this "superior education" be "faithfully adopted," it would unfailingly "produce a superior character, physical and mental, in both male and female."⁵

Despite the fact that in describing the elements that comprised a "superior education" Owen touched upon such wide-ranging subjects as proper clothing, bathing, diet, exercise, and furniture, as well as more conventional educational subject matter, there was nothing he had to say with which Maclure would not have agreed. That, however, was beside the point: Owen was making crystal clear his opinion that Maclure's educational efforts had not been getting the job done. Furthermore, Owen now made obvious his fundamental disagreement with Maclure on the matter of where to concentrate educational efforts. While Maclure had given up on grown persons, Owen had not. One of the strong points of the latter's educational plan was, he felt, that it would help allay parental fears that education might produce "too much difference" between themselves and their children. He insisted that he agreed with Maclure that there was no other way by which a true community of equality could be formed "as it ought to be" except by uncorrupted children. But, Owen argued, these children would have much greater difficulty

⁵New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 47 (August 16, 1826), 372-74.

in accomplishing this task if "counteracted" by parental "inexperience" and inability to provide "efficient cooperation." Therefore, he reasoned:

As a community of equality cannot exist in any degree of perfection until all shall be alike educated . . . --I feel inclined to recommend that arrangements should be formed to make it convenient that all, young and old, the learned and the untaught, participate in this program of community education in order that all may assist in forming this general education for the community, and that all may become useful and interesting companions for each other--and more especially, that all may learn how to become an example to the rising generation.⁶

Owen was never one to procrastinate. He exhorted the citizenry "at once, adopt measures that shall well educate and enlighten the whole community,--so that we may become as one body, having one mind, with one determination to overcome all the evils of the individual system, by removing ignorance far from us. . . ." Becoming a bit more specific, he urged that "judicious arrangements" be made immediately to "enable" everyone to meet for community education three nights a week. As for subject matter and methodology, he was blithely certain that at those meetings "all would be thoroughly instructed, most easily and pleasantly, by the manner in which the children would be asked and would answer questions." Elaborating on this point he described his instructional blueprint as:

⁶Ibid., p. 374.

. . . one of the most easy, plain and delightful modes of instruction I have ever seen; one in which I conclude all of us would, in a short time, feel so much interest, that we would be inclined to use every exertion in our power never to be absent from a single meeting.⁷

Maclure, of course, did not see Owen's plan in that light. As far as he was concerned, Owen's grand plan for community education was an abomination, for it meant the replacing of meaningful, useful education with "the parrot system,"⁸ under which the children would be taught in the same abysmally stupid catechetical manner that was being employed in most schools of the day. But Maclure was not on hand to voice his objections, and apparently his colleagues in the Education Society were either too stunned by the recent defection of pupils or too confused by Owen's rhetoric to speak out.

It was not only in the matter of educational methodology that Owen seriously compromised his reputation as an enlightened reformer--and all within the framework of a single speech. Not content with having run the gamut from making vague recommendations to issuing very specific suggestions concerning the implementation of community education, he tacked on a heavily loaded corollary to the whole proposition. Stating that the sort of education he

⁷Ibid., pp. 374-75.

⁸Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 359.

wanted all to receive could never "be obtained under institutions of Private Property,--Religions of mystery,--and unnatural Marriages," he then asserted:

Those only who have strength of mind to understand the principles which belong to the new system, and who are determined to adopt them in practice, are fit to remain members of this community.⁹

This thinly veiled threat, demanding not only acceptance of his educational plan, but also the casting aside of the "trinity of evils," as requisites for continued community membership, must have confused at least some of Owen's hearers. For a week later, when he took to the rostrum for the third week in a row to discuss still further the subject of education, one member of the community quickly rose to inquire whether one should infer from Owen's closing remarks of the previous week that those who voted for his educational plan were to "be considered in a different light with regard to becoming permanent residents of New Harmony" from those who were opposed. "I wish to know," Owen's interrogator continued, "if this question is intended to test who are to remain here permanently and who are not?" Owen's answer indicated that he was not willing to flatly deny permanent community membership to anyone who opposed him on the matter; but he replied that it was "reasonable to conclude" that those who wished to remain permanently

⁹New Harmony Gazette, I, No. 47 (August 16, 1826),

"would be desirous to qualify themselves for their situation." He added that he saw no other way by which the community could acquire the "capacity for self-government . . . except through a community education," and that type of education could "only be obtained by the arrangements proposed."¹⁰

The situation was immediately complicated by speculation as to whether education along the lines Owen had outlined would qualify those who received it to share in his property. One citizen made so bold as to ask Owen what must have been on the minds of many. "Do you mean that when we commence this community education we shall also commence the system of common property?" Owen's answer was evasive, implying that participation in his educational plan could be the key to a share of his wealth. He stated: "I do not think it would be beneficial to you to commence common property so soon. I shall be ready to form such a community whenever you shall be prepared for it." This did not completely satisfy his questioner, who persisted: "But suppose I should say I am ready?" Again Owen turned him aside with generalities tinged with hints that compliance with his grand design might well lead to the division of his property--a division it was obvious was much hoped for by many of those present.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., I, No. 49 (August 30, 1826), 390-91.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 391.

Though it is easy to condemn Owen for this repeated carrot-dangling, it must be said in his defense that it is most unlikely that he really intended to delude his hearers. By terms like "prepared" and "ready" he probably meant "prepared" to the point of being able to produce a surplus over what was consumed, which would in turn indicate a readiness to share--and pay for--the property in question. His educational plan would, he was sure, "prepare" those citizens who exposed themselves to it by making them self-sufficient. Until such a condition existed he had no intention of commencing "common property." On the other hand, what these words meant to his listeners was something quite different. They, for the most part, probably saw his stipulations concerning community education as some sort of test of their sincerity, which if passed to Owen's satisfaction, could lead to a very material reward. Therefore, it was hardly surprising that when the proposal to adopt immediately "a community education" was put by Mr. Owen, it carried unanimously.¹²

Before he had been interrupted by such pointed questions, Owen had expanded somewhat upon his program for community education. One reason, he assured his audience, why his plan would prove efficacious was that within the

¹² Ibid.

very crowd assembled before him were individuals "whose aggregate information" would, he boasted, "amount to perhaps as much as can be found in the same number together in any part of the world." Therefore, if, during their recitations the children and even their teachers proved in "want of particular information," one of the many experts in attendance could "immediately supply the deficiency." Expanding on the point Owen declared:

If the children should be unable to answer the questions asked, or if their teachers should not be sufficiently informed to answer the questions put to them, we should then have the benefit of all of the intelligence present, to help the children and the teachers, to the answer required; and when that answer is given to one, it is at the same instant given for the benefit of all. It therefore requires no more than an honest endeavor on your part to attend regularly, take your seats quietly, and listen attentively. By this simple process, you will acquire a better education, and more valuable knowledge than has been given by any system of instruction heretofore put into practice. No line of demarcation need therefore be drawn between those who are first and those who are last in intelligence; there need be no distinction of teacher and pupil; but all may be regarded as teachers and all as pupils; the one best qualified to instruct on the subject to be taught for the night, will be the teacher for that evening.¹³

Although the vote to commence at once Owen's program of education had been unanimous, some nagging doubts lingered. It was decided by voice vote that the members, together with their children, would meet in the Hall on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings at 7 o'clock precisely. To

¹³Ibid., p. 390.

ensure promptness the bell was to be rung at six-thirty and again at a quarter-to-seven. At this point the objection was raised that the women would find it difficult to prepare supper in time. Owen immediately pounced on this rather innocent remark, using it as an excuse to complain about female sloth, while at the same time arguing that his educational plan would put an end to it. He observed that he had long endeavored to ascertain the real cause why so much difficulty had been experienced by the females of the community "in the performance of their domestic duties." By all logic, he insisted, their work load should have been lighter than it could ever have been in "individual society." He had finally concluded that the true cause of the failure of the women to do better lay in the fact that they were for the most part strangers to each other; and therefore, when they met together "in order to cooperate in some domestic labor," they had had an unfortunate tendency to "spend that time in talking, which should be devoted exclusively to work." Since his new plan of education would afford everyone the opportunity of meeting and conversing together frequently, there would no longer be any reason why they could not get their work done on schedule.¹⁴

Not everyone was convinced that getting more work out of the women would be that easy. It was suggested that

¹⁴
Ibid., p. 391.

there existed "great jealousy among the females," that some were "afraid of doing more than their fair share," and others were "afraid of doing anything." Owen's reply was typically vague, optimistic and repetitive; it resembled a press agent's handout in its unqualified espousal of his educational program as a panacea for all the community's ills:

There will be no jealousy of the kind mentioned in minds that are well formed and well informed. The acquisition of knowledge and intelligence is not only the shortest course that we can adopt to overcome these evils, but it is the most easy and delightful that can be imagined. Carry the plan now proposed for training all to become intelligent, into immediate execution, then there will be none of those numerous imaginary notions which now create unhappiness. These notions to a well-formed and well-informed mind will not be worth a moment's consideration. Then will our conversation and our view of things be totally changed. We shall be surprised that the trifles which have heretofore engaged the chief attention of men and made them miserable, had ever been permitted to occupy our thoughts. We shall no longer censure any party for pernicious effects; but we shall be able easily to trace the causes which have produced them, and as easily to remove them. And this community education will be a most powerful cause to effect a change in the whole character of the community. And this change is very desirable; for it will create good feelings--day by day will it expand the mind, until, ultimately, we shall all have minds and characters very superior to those which belong to us at present.¹⁵

Because of the confusing mixture of lofty explanations, hints of material rewards to come, and thinly veiled threats that Owen had used to persuade his listeners to

¹⁵ Ibid.

endorse his educational program, some were left bewildered as to whether participation was to be voluntary or mandatory. Owen tried to conclude his remarks on a positive note by reminding everyone to be present the following evening to commence the course in community education. He summed up with the statement: "All that is now wanted to enable us to enter prudently into a community of equality and common property is the acquisition by all of this community education." But this still did not completely clarify the situation. A direct question from the audience finally pinned Owen down. To the query: "Is it necessary that everyone who contemplates remaining amongst us should acquire this community education?", he answered: "It is highly desirable that it should be acquired by every man, woman, and child above three years of age, who is intended for, or who intends to be a full member of a community of common property."¹⁶ That finally made things clear. What had started out as a somewhat diffident recommendation on Owen's part had somehow become tantamount to a requirement: presence at the thrice a week sessions of community education had obviously been made a test of moral fitness for those who intended to remain in New Harmony; while for those who had hopes of eventually sharing in his property, attendance at the meetings had become mandatory.

¹⁶ Ibid.

XVII

Strained Relations

Neither what Owen had said in the three speeches on education he delivered at New Harmony Hall, nor the sort of questions he had then been asked by his hearers went over Maclure's head. Maclure saw through both Owen and his interrogators. He shrewdly noted that though Owen's answers were "so vague that little can be known by them," it was "not so with the questions." They spoke "volumes on the motives of the questioners." Maclure was certain that for far too many the "principal motive" for remaining in New Harmony was the prospect of "making all the benefit" from the eventual division of Owen's considerable holdings. But Maclure was equally convinced that Owen was so full of "high visionary ideas" and "flights of imagination" as to have become unable to recognize such naked greed even when it was so patently obvious.¹

As for what he termed "O's sermon on education," Maclure dismissed it as "the greatest mixture of contradictions I ever read." It proved to Maclure not only "the

¹"Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 357-58, 361.

superficial knowledge of Mr. O. on education," but also that he was "incorrigible." It was time, Maclure instructed Madame Fretageot, to "get out of the alliance" with Owen "as well as we can."²

But disgusted as he was with both Owen and the citizens of New Harmony, Maclure's loyalty to the cause of reform, coupled with his sensitivity to public opinion, made him anxious to avoid an open break. He warned Madame Fretageot regarding Owen: "On no count make it appear that we differ from him in any material matter. Don't be too quick in following [his] visionary schemes, but proceed slowly and cautiously, for his is certainly . . . mad."³

Yet even as he urged Madame Fretageot to disassociate herself from Owen's plans, Maclure suspected that her worsening relations with Neef and his family might be driving her into Owen's camp. He warned her that she was "too full of Owen," and he pleaded, "Don't allow your enthousiazm to embark your all in his fate." He added that should she persist in her support of Owen to the extent of "having a school on the Owen principle," he would not "contradict" her, but he again entreated her: "Keep cool and dispassionate. Don't act upon the ideas of the moment. Take a day,

²Ibid., p. 361.

³Ibid., pp. 361-62.

a week, and often a month to look at every side of the object."⁴

But Madame Fretageot, in spite of Maclure's repeated warnings and complaints, was willing to go along with Owen's plan for community education. In doing so she rejected not only Maclure's advice but also that of the other members of the Education Society. Her decision was probably less due to Owen's persuasive power than to her having been expelled from membership in the Education Society. Ostensibly her expulsion was for rejecting a particular teaching assignment, but probably her strained relations with Neef and his family had more to do with it. Once barred from the Education Society's ranks she wasted no time in setting up a rival boarding school for those older boys whose parents were members of the Agricultural and Mechanical Societies; and, not content with this, she also established a school for "a multitude of young children of both sexes who resorted there every day."⁵ All this, of course, had Owen's blessing.

Just how deep was Madame Fretageot's betrayal was a matter of much conjecture among her former teaching colleagues. Some even suspected her of being "at the bottom

⁴Ibid., p. 362.

⁵Paul Brown, Twelve Months in New Harmony (Cincinnati: William Hill Woodward, 1827), p. 82.

of most of the overturning manoeuvres" that had taken place, and of "being willing by ingratiating herself with Owen and Maclure to promote her own interest exclusive of theirs."⁶ Whatever the extent of her duplicity, the shock of her unexpected defection greatly upset Maclure. On August 30, 1826 he wrote to her that while he had "anticipated some of the effects that Mr. O's interference with education must produce," he had expected that "common prudence" should certainly have dictated to her "not to be in a hurry to throw all into confusion." Even if it were to be admitted that charges she had made of "carelessness" on the part of Neef and his helpers were true, which Maclure frankly informed her he much doubted, her rejection of her teaching assignment "was not the way to correct them." Instead, she should have used her class to show the Neefs "an example of order, cleanliness and propriety . . . , that they might and no doubt would have imitated." "As only one of the voices in the school community," Maclure continued, she should have accepted whatever decisions were democratically arrived at, even if "Neef's helpers & family" constituted "nearly a majority" of its membership. As for her good opinion of Robert Owen, Maclure had this to say:

You praise much the suppleness of Mr. O. but forget that it is all in words. . . . You seem totally to

⁶Ibid.

neglect his actions. . . . Mr. O. in sermons and in words is the most supple of the human species, and the most obstinate in action. He is likewise the most vain. He rants in big vague and undefined words out of which he has always many holes to creep thro'. . . .

You seem to think that no community will succeed but under his management. Quite the contrary is the fact. All have failed by following the blaze of his wild theories without possessing the wealth which alone has supported him. Tho he fails in every attempt, yet he returns to the selfsame ground to be certainly defeated again, as he will be in this contradictory system of education. . . .⁷

Maclure concluded his tirade against Owen by accusing him of "tottall ignorance and . . . quackery," and even of having "been afraid of the independence and success of the School Community and resolved to involve it in the general wreck." But although Maclure admitted to Madame Fretageot his bitter disappointment in her "immitation" of Owen, he was not by any means ready to give either her or the educational experiment up as lost. He confessed to her that were it not for the fact that he had "already advanced 35,000 dollars to the school community," a sum he estimated as perhaps double what the property would have ordinarily sold for, he would much rather have made all further educational experiments "100 miles from all the . . . visionary, frustrated schemes of Mr. O. at Harmony than so near it as to be interrupted by the vicinity of so much discordant materials." However, Maclure continued, although his heavy

⁷Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," pp. 364-66.

investment in New Harmony property had eliminated the possibility of setting up schools elsewhere, he believed the Education Society could survive "under proper management," despite Owen's disruptive presence. But in order to do so it must deal solely with "orphans" and children of parents "with the good sence" to resist "the influence of O's sermons." He then foreshadowed the future direction of his educational efforts by reiterating his belief that it was "too soon to attempt any beneficial reform in education with Children under the control of their ignorant Parents." He had become convinced, he told Madame, that all future educational experiments on his part must be made only "with them that have none to warp their natural faculties." He begged her to again join forces with him in these educational "tryals," leaving Owen "to himself," thereby escaping "the wreck he has surrounded himself with."⁸

Since Maclure was ready to admit that all of his own previous mistakes of the past "put together" did not equal "the stupidity" he had been guilty of when he had agreed to associate himself with Owen, he could hardly blame Madame Fretageot for also "having been deceived in the charracter of Mr. O. . . ." "But," he assured her, "it is not too late. What I have at stake I can lose without being

⁸Ibid., p. 365.

ruined." However, she must disabuse herself of any hope of reconciling him with Owen. He informed her:

Tho O. and I can never act together, as I have long told him, we need not oppose one another. Our roads are separate and distinct. Tho he has (unconsciously I believe) ruined some of my plans for the present, they, I flatter myself, are so deep rooted in the interest of the great mass that they must eventually succeed.

Make your mind easy on its being intirely out of your power to make Mr. Owen & I act together, or to invest any more of my property in his schemes. What I have I believe I can yet do some good with, as certainly as I think he will spend all his without benefiting any but the most useless of mankind.⁹

There was something else Madame had to understand if she and Maclure were to effect renewed rapport. He wanted her to clearly realize that her "opinion of Neef and family . . . notwithstanding," he still thought that "by their help" he would eventually "be able to prove" what he had "been long speculating upon, that children under proper tuition will educate, feed and cloth themselves by their own industry. . . ." He did try to soften the effect on her of his unqualified support of the Neefs with phrases intended to soothe: "Take time. Do nothing in a hurry nor anything you cannot easily undo. Don't be disappointed at late events. They cannot hurt or endanger your future prospects. Make yourself as happy as you can." But he could not avoid admonishing her one final time: "Avoid giving pain to any one, and above all curb ambition."¹⁰

⁹Ibid., pp. 366-67.

¹⁰Ibid.

Madame Fretageot was hardly the sort to take all of this criticism and advice without coming to her own defense. Though her letters to Maclure in reply to his complaints have not been preserved, much of what she had to say may be inferred from his next communication to her, dated September 19, 1826. He acknowledged receipt of two letters from her, dated August 25 and September 8. In them she had flown into such a rage as to wish herself "back in Philadelphia," and had accused him of "being deceived" by the stories told him by her enemies. He rejected this charge. He had, he told her, only believed what she herself had said she "intended to do," and what she had actually "attempted to do against the opinion of the whole of the School Community." He complained: "What a necromancer must that Mr. O. be that has so bewitched you!" But no sooner had he lamented over Owen's unfortunate influence over her than he again referred at some length to his own full support of Neef--which was probably the most significant factor involved in her defection. He berated her for now seeming "to prefer the parrot method of sticking incomprehensibles into the memories of Children as you would do pins into a pincushion, to the Pestalozzian System, as taught by Mr. Neef," who, he again assured her, he had "reason to believe by experience, has taught it in greater perfection than ever it was taught before." While he would

admit that Neef, "like all men, has his failings," he insisted that "as a teacher he has made more clever men for the number he was allowed to educate than . . . ever came from any school on earth." Claiming to have followed the progress of all of Neef's pupils "into man's estate," and to have observed "only two out of seventy" to have "gone astray," Maclure made it clear that his loyalty to Neef was undiminished. "What a weather-cock you must have thought me," he wrote, to dare suspect that the years of experience of working with Neef could be sacrificed to the "whims & caprices" of Owen, "who has failed in every attempt he has made here to improve adults and is now trying his hand on Children with most probably the same success."¹¹

His anger with Madame Fretageot caused Maclure to forget that he had earlier been unwilling to blame Owen for any conscious effort to undermine his plans. He bombarded her with a series of rhetorical questions that reveal how suspicious her continued support of Owen had made him:

Who disgusted the people with the Pestalozzian system to render Neef unpopular but O.? Who laid schemes and intrigued to get control of the School Community but O.? Who employed you to revenge himself on Neef because he was the only man in Harmony that told him the truth of his parrot system, but O.? Who is now trying to join the School community to his debilitated communities, to sweep all into the vortex of ruin and destruction, but O.?¹²

¹¹Ibid., pp. 367-68.

¹²Ibid., p. 368.

Madame Fretageot herself came in for a terrible scolding, only slightly mitigated by the acknowledgement that she had been "heretofore exceedingly usefull in improving education." Maclure had some rhetorical questions that indicted her, too. Even supposing for a moment all her complaints of rags, filth, and dreadful eating habits on the part of the Neefs were true, what right had she "to interfere with the duties of others?" Who had appointed her "lord god and governor of the community?" True, he admitted, she had found one lone supporter in the ranks of the Education Society. But that one, Robert Dale Owen, whether having voted in her favor as a result of "parental coercion," or in "gratitude" for her having nursed him during a recent illness, hardly compensated for the loss of faith in her on the part of all the rest of her "companions and equals of the School Community." Her "ambition and love of power" had brought her into this "humiliating situation." Maclure predicted that unless she was willing to "think better" of her decision to side with Owen, she would find herself completely "unprotected" as soon as Owen realized that his theories would not "go down in this country."¹³

That Maclure's increasingly acerbaceous opinion of Owen may have been in some part due to simple jealousy

¹³Ibid., pp. 368-69.

cannot be completely ruled out. His friendship with Madame Fretageot had been an extremely close one of long standing; and whether they had been romantically involved or not, she had never been adverse to using the most blatant sort of flattery to cajole and to influence him. But the above letter strongly suggests that while her falling in with Owen's plans was terribly upsetting to him, his loyalties to Neef and the Pestalozzian method transcended any personal consideration--including the risk of losing her friendship. Furthermore, his irritation with Owen had clearly grown in direct proportion to the degree to which he felt his educational plans threatened by the latter's tactics. Finally, as added proof that jealousy over Madame Fretageot was not a key factor in the situation, there is the fact that no matter how disgusted he became with Owen, Maclure always took pains to defend him against charges of sexual libertinism.¹⁴

Whatever the wellspring of Maclure's vivid anger, in a less lonely persuasion than that of early nineteenth century reformer, such a blistering letter as he had written might well have severed all further communication between Madame Fretageot and himself. This was hardly the case. Less than a week after his letter of September 19, 1826 to her, he received news from her so reassuring that it affected

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 349, 355.

a complete transformation in him. He wrote to her on September 25, 1826 to tell her that her latest letter, accompanied by one from Robert Dale Owen, had given him "much pleasure." No wonder. For these two letters had informed him that "all cause of dispute had happily subsided," and also that she was once more in the fold of the Education Society and planned to reassume her teaching duties--along Pestalozzian lines, naturally. Although he had previously insisted that he had not judged her actions by what he had heard from others, but solely by what she herself had written in her letters to him, he now readily accepted her claim that the entire misunderstanding between them had arisen from "a misconception of one another's opinions and motives." So complete, in fact, was Maclure's relief at having Madame back under his ideological roof that he became solicitous, urging her not to "repine" because she had fewer children to teach than she would have liked. He assured her:

Give yourself no uneasiness about the fate of the schools. As soon as you have all organized you will have pupils enough. The fewer you have the more perfect [?] will they be educated, and no one will inquire on examining their progress how many pupils you had.¹⁵

Yet in spite of his obvious eagerness to patch things up, Maclure could not resist cautioning Madame to

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 369-71.

"be united," and not to "allow the most dextrous intriguer to enter his wage [wedge] between you." Nor could he find it within himself to write of Robert Owen in a favorable light. Sarcastically titling him "the Chief," Maclure commented on his "inordinate vanity," which continually led him to "take council only from those weak and insignificant beings" who flattered all of his "foibles, whims and caprices." As for Owen's theories concerning the education of children, under which the memories of the children were to be "twisted and tortured," Maclure admitted that he held a "more despicable opinion" of them than he did of "the most absurd part of the old system." And returning to the theme of his earlier letters to her, Maclure again suggested that the two of them let Owen go his own way, while they limited their aims to educating children "in such a manner as to be an example to all that examine them. . . ." ¹⁶

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 370-72.

XVIII

Open Conflict

Whether due to the impending cold weather or to alarm over what was transpiring at New Harmony during their absence, Maclure and Say returned to New Harmony on October 7, 1826. The Gazette of Wednesday, October 11, 1826 reported their arrival, adding that they had both returned to the village "in good health," and had brought with them "some valuable materials for Mr. Say's work."¹ Unfortunately, the town's health did not come close to matching that of the two men. The experiment Maclure had suggested of dividing the community by occupations had not succeeded, and Owen was again deeply involved in a scheme of re-organization--the fourth major one in a nine month span. Of course it is most unlikely that Maclure would have admitted that he had been the author of the plan to subdivide the community along occupational lines, at least in the form in which Owen had actually done so. For in a letter to Madame Fretageot, dated August 29, 1826, Maclure had mapped out a plan of action he believed Owen might have followed with a much better chance of success. First of all, Owen should have

¹New Harmony Gazette, II, No. 2 (October 11, 1826),
15.

kept the tavern in his own hands "as a regulator for all the communities." The "town mechanics" should have been divided into cooperative groups along occupational lines. And finally, the "town agriculturals," having proven themselves by "their previous habits," incapable "of doing anything for themselves or others," should have been abandoned.²

The ruthlessness inherent in the last of his suggested reorganizational moves does not seem to have troubled Maclure in the least. Nor did he try to understand that such a tactic would have been tantamount to an admission of failure on Owen's part; for it must be remembered that one of Owen's fondest claims for his communitarian system was the improvement it was capable of producing even among the most degraded element of the population. Still more ominous a portent of continued and accelerating misunderstanding between the two men was Maclure's use of the past tense in describing what Owen might have done but had not; the theme is clearly one of opportunities wasted and beyond reclaim. All of which indicates that Maclure, like Say, had brought back something from his four month journey. Unlike Say's specimens, it was intangible, yet, in terms of the social experiment it was very real: the feeling on his part

² "Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 360-61.

that both Owen and most of the adult material in the community were completely "incorrigible." Almost every piece of news Maclure had received concerning the New Harmony situation had either filled him with increased foreboding, or confirmed yet another of his dire predictions. His inspection of the Yellow Springs experiment had hardly been an experience of a sort to bolster his sagging faith. He had, in addition, visited the newly formed community of Nevilsville, another experimental site inspired by Owenite doctrine; and what he found there had been equally discouraging. The settlement was located on the Ohio River, about twenty-five miles above Cincinnati. Mr. Nevil himself had originally offered to provide 2500 acres of land for the experiment, but he told Maclure that this act of generosity had been quickly followed by the demand that he give up "all his property to be in common," a request he thought--and Maclure heartily agreed--"it would be madness to comply with."³

Nor was this all that disgusted Maclure. For in the affairs of both the Yellow Springs and the Nevilsville communities he had detected the machinations of that same Paul Brown, who had been so tormenting Owen at New Harmony. Apparently not content with being Owen's personal gadfly, Brown, like Owen, was capable of spreading himself quite

³ Ibid., pp. 359-60.

thin. Brown visited Yellow Springs and Nevilsville; and in each place, as Maclure sarcastically noted, he "tried his skill as an experienced community man . . .," doing his best to get everyone to "act upon the most exaggerated principles of Owenism," and to "totally . . . forget the state of society they are in, as if a few lectures from a heated imagination could possibly reform the work of many centuries, and the greatest change that ever was attempted on earth . . . be effected like magic or a change in the scenes of a Theatre."⁴

If Maclure had returned to New Harmony grimly determined to confine his philanthropic efforts solely to educational "tryals" with the very young, what he saw on every side of him can only have served to further convince him of the wisdom of his decision. True, Madame Fretageot had ended her brief flirtation with Owen's "parrot method" of community education, and the entire plan itself had already been shelved, after having been in effect for less than two months.⁵ While this development undoubtedly gave Maclure no small degree of personal satisfaction, an article which appeared on the very same page of the issue of the

⁴Ibid., p. 360. *

⁵Paul Brown, Twelve Months in New Harmony (Cincinnati: William Hill Woodward, 1827), p. 41. See also: Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way (London: Trubner & Co., 1874), p. 288.

Gazette that had announced his and Say's return, must have alerted him to the danger that Owen was far from through meddling in the community's educational affairs. For, ignoring completely the cold fact that the program was already defunct, the article was a glowing progress report, full of wildly inflated claims for Owen's brand of community education. According to the piece, which well may have been written by Owen himself,⁶ so effective had been the "new system of instruction" that "the steady progress in good habits and substantial improvement among the younger part of the population," had been "obvious to everyone." The character of the children, the report continued, was completely altered. The new system had from the outset "fixed their attention and changed their whole conduct." They had become "most punctual in their attendance upon the lectures," and took "an extraordinary interest in them." Better yet, they had "abandoned, to a great extent, their wild, irrational mode of conduct," and their industry was keeping pace with their other improvements; so much so that their parents had, in general, expressed "the greatest satisfaction at the change effected in their children." In fact, the article went on to boast, so effective had Owen's brand of community education proved to be in the brief time since it had been

⁶Ibid., p. 79.

instituted, that the parents themselves had "also made a considerable advance in temperance and industry."⁷

Naturally, Maclure's own observations had not borne out any of this, and he must have bitterly resented the charge--implicit in every line of the report--that prior to Owen's taking a hand, the education of the children had been badly bungled.

However, Maclure's own educational plans were not faring very well either. Rivalries among the teachers in the Education Society had by this time resulted in the formation of three separate schools: one taught by Neef and members of his family in Community House No. 2; another by Phiquepal in the Steeple House and the Hall; and the third by Madame Fretageot in Maclure's mansion, which was now called Community House No. 5. Still, all were back on the Pestalozzian track; and this was enough to give Maclure such confidence in the eventual success of the Education Society that he proceeded to devote some time to yet another project doomed to eventual failure. He drafted a petition requesting from the Indiana state legislature an act of incorporation for the "New-Harmony Education Society."⁸

Since nowhere in his correspondence or formal

15. ⁷New Harmony Gazette, II, No. 2 (October 11, 1826),

⁸Ibid., II, No. 19 (February 14, 1827), 158.

writings did Maclure ever make mention of his petition's rejection, it seems probable that, even as he composed his request, his hopes that the legislature would cooperate were never too high. Even so, when the rejection came it was just one more rebuff. And come it did. In its February 14, 1827 issue, an editorial in the Gazette informed its readers that the petition had been turned down by the state senate by a vote of 15 to 4. The article added, in that optimistic vein so common to Gazette editorials, that the senate's action was "in itself a matter of little moment," since it was "certain that in a year or two, the gradual progress of liberality and science" would result in the petition's "hearty adoption." What really hurt, the piece went on, was the lack of respect shown by the legislators "for the cause to which Wm. Maclure has devoted his life and his fortune--the cause of education and the sciences." It could only be presumed, the editorial concluded, that the legislature had "no confidence" in the New Harmony experiment.⁹ There is a wry sort of irony in the fact that, barring the sole exception of the New Harmony schools, Maclure very probably would have concurred in the legislators' vote of no confidence in either the community or its intentions.

Political developments in the community were, if

⁹Ibid.

less of a personal affront to Maclure, hardly a source of satisfaction. Owen's latest reorganization had put "sole management and control" into the hands of a board of five trustees--Owen himself and four men he appointed. Apparently the chief reason for the reorganization had been to allow for the weeding out process which now took place, for this time admission to membership in the society was not quite so easy to come by. Maclure had, of course, long endorsed such a policy, but even he was forced to agree with Paul Brown's charge that, under this new form of government, "partiality" became commonplace, with "favorites and the families of trustees" being "indulged with conveniences," which others were denied.¹⁰ Maclure echoed Brown's complaint, adding: "Things are far from being in the state Mr. O. flatters himself they are." As far as Maclure was concerned, the main result of this most recent reorganization had been an increase in feelings of "jealousy, distrust and discontent" among everyone except those few accorded preferential treatment.¹¹

Perhaps some of these things had a little to do with Maclure's decision, made after he had been back in New Harmony for only seven weeks, that, with winter coming on,

¹⁰Brown, p. 76.

¹¹Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 376.

a warmer climate would prove more congenial to his health. On November 25, 1826, he departed, this time alone, for New Orleans. Once again, no sooner had he left the troubled town than he resumed his correspondence with Madame Fretageot. His first letter to her, written from Mount Vernon and dated November 28, 1826, offers clear proof that his seven week stay in New Harmony had done nothing to alter any of his opinions. In addition to complaining that Owen's latest reorganization was a complete failure, he expressed his alarm over the rumor that was current in Mount Vernon that everyone in the nearby vicinity was flocking to the New Harmony community store "for all their groceries and goods when they have cash, because it is the cheapest shop in the whole country." He greatly feared that this was an indication of Owen's desperate need for money, and he repeated once more his oft-stated warning that Owen "must not depend" on him "for more than the ballance the School Corporation will owe him next spring," adding that Owen had "got nearly 1/2 of all I possess but shall not get any more." As far as Maclure was concerned, Owen had become so dangerously positive of his own infallibility that he required nothing more in an individual upon which "to found unlimitted confidence . . . than a perfect coincidence with his opinions, which few but rog[ue]s and

hypocrites would even pretend to."¹²

Nor was Owen the only member of the New Harmony populace Maclure singled out for scorn. Matters were also coming to a head where Phiquepal was concerned. The eccentric Frenchman's estrangement from the Education Society had become so complete that he had isolated the boys he taught from all intercourse with the rest of the community. But what bothered Maclure most about Phiquepal was his colossal vanity. When crossed, he became especially "dangerous," because he was both "mad," yet capable of influencing others.¹³

But perhaps Owen and Phiquepal were merely names at the top of a long list. For in summing up his complaints, Maclure had this to say on yet another of his recurring themes: "My experience at Harmony has given me such a horror for the reformation of grown persons that I shudder when I reflect having so many of my friends so near such a desperate undertaking."¹⁴

The constant theme that reverberates throughout Maclure's correspondence at this juncture is his fervent hope to disassociate himself completely from Owen and his

¹² Ibid., pp. 376-77.

¹³ Ibid., p. 377.

¹⁴ Ibid.

schemes. But that was to prove no easy task. On November 29, 1826, only four days after Maclure had left the community to go south for the winter, an editorial that appeared in the Gazette made it obvious that Maclure's troubles with Owen were far from over. More than likely written by Owen himself, the article served notice that Owen's plan to take a hand in the community's educational affairs had been only temporarily put aside. It claimed that "satisfactory arrangements" had been made by which "soon" all the children of the community were to be "educated together as one family." While this in itself was sufficient to arouse Maclure's ire, he became justifiably enraged by another passage in the same editorial. Referring to a "misconception" among the members of the Education Society concerning the boundary lines of their property, the article went on to summarily dismiss their complaint, claiming that "a little reflection" would convince the society's membership of their "error"--there being more than enough land for everyone; and when they themselves required more it could "be obtained without difficulty." Continuing in the same unctious tone, the editorial concluded:

It deserves not a moment's consideration whether one Society has a little more or a little less land at the present, provided a line shall be adopted, that will prevent them from interfering with each other's principles, objects, and arrangements. Shortly each member of all these Societies will discover, that they have but one and the same interest. These little matters,

creating some temporary difference of feeling, being once adjusted, the rapidity of our progress will be much accelerated.¹⁵

Reading between the lines, which Maclure and other members of the Education Society had no trouble whatsoever in doing, the purpose of the editorial was to gloss over the actual situation, which was that Owen had demanded the return of part of the land he had deeded to Maclure. However, the Education Society's boundaries had been fixed by a written agreement, and neither Maclure nor the other members of the Education Society were in any mood to allow Owen to get away with such high-handed tactics, no matter how he tried to confuse the issue by using the rhetoric of cooperation. Joseph Neef, being on the scene, took it upon himself to provide the Education Society's version of the incident. He wrote a letter to the Gazette, in which he asserted that it had been Owen's demand for return of the land "several months after the bargain had been struck," and not the Education Society's "misconception" of the boundary lines that had caused so much dissension. "Mr. Owen," Neef concluded, "ought to adhere to his contract and leave us in quiet possession of the land ceded to us."¹⁶ But the Gazette refused to publish Neef's letter, yet

70. ¹⁵New Harmony Gazette, II, No. 9 (November 29, 1826),

¹⁶Brown, pp. 80-81.

another ominous sign that Owen was becoming ever more arbitrary.

Maclure, when made aware of these developments, was not overly surprised. Since, he ruefully admitted, he had long been "in the habit of foreseeing every possible unfortunate event that could happen, on purpose to have time to prepare for them and contrive some remedy before evil comes," he had long "been contemplating the possibility of a quarell" with Owen. Such a quarrel would "certainly take place," Maclure informed Madame Fretageot in a letter dated January 3, 1827, if Owen persisted "in the declaration he has so often made of annulling the lease, that solemn contract made and executed before witnesses after being read in an audible voice to the whole party." For Owen to insist that a group of witnesses that included not only Joseph Applegarth, Madame Fretageot and Joseph Neef, but his own son, Robert Dale Owen, and a lawyer named Amos Clark, had all been a party to an attempt to "swindle" him, was patently absurd. In view of Owen's having taken such a position, Maclure was ready with a couple of threats of his own: he would insist on following the lease "in every article or condition;" above all, he would refuse to pay Owen "one cent more before it was due." This did not mean, he quickly assured Madame Fretageot, that he would no longer "try to support" the schools, even though it had been due to his

originally "trusting to the good sense of Mr. Owen and his communities" that he had proceeded "on so great a scale." Even she, Maclure added, must now be "convinced" that this trust had been placed in "a broken reed." Yet, Maclure reassured her, he still intended to persevere in "propagating the Pestalozzian;" although he noted ruefully that "if every experiment was to cost what that at Harmony will, it's but few that my means would enable me to try."¹⁷

Maclure's next letter to Madame Fretageot, dated February 8, 1827, referred to a new development: that "madman" Phiquepal had placed himself "under the supposed protection of Mr. Owen," and was becoming "worse and worse" in his attacks upon the teaching of natural history in the New Harmony schools. Such an attack was especially hard to endure from Phiquepal, who, as far as Maclure was concerned, had "completely failed, his irritable bad temper and worse habits" having rendered him "intirely unfit to teach." His presence would certainly not be missed by the Education Society. But given his ability to influence the opinions of others, coupled with his "aversion to sciences," Maclure was afraid that nothing would satisfy him but the complete annihilation of the sciences from the curriculum.¹⁸

¹⁷Bestor (ed.), "Correspondence of W. Maclure and M. Fretageot," p. 381-83.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 383-84.

Maclure informed Madame Fretageot that taking the traitorous Phiquepal into his camp was yet another tactic he had "long suspected" Owen might try. Again Maclure had a counter measure ready: unless Phiquepal paid him for all the items that had been lent to or bought for his school, he was not to be permitted to take any supplies--other than his personal belongings--into Owen's part of town. As for dealing with Owen himself, Maclure depended upon his hunch that in his partner's immediate need for funds lay the protection needed to make him live up to his side of their agreement. That Owen had been forced "to apply" to Maclure's brother Alexander for "more money," bore out this line of thinking. To William it was obvious that "under various pretences," Owen's "time serving sicofants" and "spoiled" followers were merely "living upon his money." Thus, it followed that Owen dared not allow his funds to dry up, since when his money was "finished," so too would be "his experiments."¹⁹

But Maclure was under no delusion that Owen would be increasingly malleable as he became more vulnerable financially. In his judgment neither Owen nor anyone about him was "practical." Maclure had come to consider him the most obstinate man he had ever known. It was Owen's

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 384-85.

"obstinacy," Maclure confessed to Madame Fretageot, that caused him to "fear for our schools." Not only did Owen not have "the smallest idea of a good education," he would not, Maclure suspected, permit any decent plan of education "to flourish within his reach," being "like all enthusiasts, determined to carry his point" and willing to "sacrifice every other consideration for it."²⁰

So jaundiced, in fact, had Maclure's opinion of Owen become that he now dolefully described the adverse effects caused by Owen's "trinity of evils" speech--a speech he had once thought masterful. Owen's remarks, Maclure was now certain, had "excited . . . immense prejudices," if not "a kind of horror" among the general public against anything connected with the town of New Harmony, and would make it virtually impossible for "the schools at Harmony to get any scholars from abroad this year." This meant, he cautioned Madame, that expenses must be curtailed, and kept "as near the limits of . . . production as possible." He saw no purpose in wasting much money on an establishment that could "benefit . . . only a few boys whose Parents scarce no [know] the value of the education we are at such pains and expense to give their children."²¹

²⁰ Ibid., p. 385.

²¹ Ibid., p. 384.

Apparently Maclure was still not convinced that Madame Fretageot had completely freed herself from Owen's spell. For he added yet a further charge--that Owen had, because of his self-assurance and over-eagerness, allowed himself to be "cheated by Rapp," by not having first obtained the services of a "man of knowledge of the local country" to aid him in assessing the true value of the Rappites' property. Maclure even anticipated Madame Fretageot's defense of Owen on the grounds that "all this" had not been his fault: Maclure's rejoinder was that he did not really blame Owen, but felt compelled to point out the latter's many mistakes, "only to show that we would be fools to trust such an inexperienced Pilot who will not change but perservere[?] to the last."²²

In his next letter to Madame Fretageot, dated February 24, 1827, Maclure again referred to the "harm" done to the cause of "the community system" by Owen's "premature" and intemperate "trinity of evils" speech; and he accused Owen of having been prompted by "self conceit" and of being "in a hurry to be the first to proclaim a new era." Expanding on this theme Maclure made explicit one of the basic divergencies between his mode of thinking and that of Owen. He asserted that he had "always thought

²²Ibid., p. 385.

that the practice ought to have preceeded the theory," and that mankind ought not to be "alarmed . . . with the promulgation of principles that cannot for a long serious [series] of years come to the relief of any of the sufferers." Maclure further argued that, since in dealing with any new set of circumstances "it is always difficult to know how to act," it was especially necessary that caution should be exercised in the introduction of radical reforms--the would-be reformer should always proceed by "going slowly and trying upon a small scale by way of experiment, presenting the small edge of the wage [wedge] not forcing the butt[t] end against inveterate prejudices." Therefore it was very important that the distinction be made by the world at large between "the community system" and "the mode Mr. Owen . . . chose to put it in execution." Maclure claimed that he thought "better every day of the system in the exact proportion" that experience had convinced him that Owen was "not the practical man to make it succeed." Had Owen advanced "his schemes as experiments that must be tryed and changed so as to suit circumstances," and had he "made the experiment upon a small scale and with the best materials that could be found, . . . no one could have had any right to blame him. . . ." But, by completely ignoring what was most probable--that "the present race" was "unfit" material--Owen had made a fatal mistake. All of which led Maclure back to a familiar

conclusion: the community system's salvation lay in "teaching the rising generation to think by a usefull and practical education. . . ." As far as Maclure was concerned, Owen had forfeited all rights to continued support from him on two counts: (1) his millenial plans for reforming such fundamental institutions as the family, religious beliefs, and marriage, as well as the schools--with all to be accomplished at a moment's notice--were far too sweeping to have any chance of success; and (2) his grandiose schemes for community education not only failed to differentiate the "parrot method" from the Pestalozzian, but rejected the idea of concentrating all educational effort upon "the rising generation."²³

The letters Maclure wrote to Madame Fretageot during the winter of 1827 contained several other familiar complaints and cautionary remarks. He relished the thought of Owen's disillusionment now that he had Phiquepal "on his own pocket," especially since it had not been "very delicate" of Owen to have encouraged that apostate pedant to "dissipate" as much of Maclure's own money as he could before having been excluded from the Education Society. And turning to other topics much on his mind, Maclure again warned Madame Fretageot not to adopt Owen's low opinion of Neef, since it was based on Neef's being incapable of flattering

²³ Ibid., pp. 387-88.

Owen's "foibles." Nor should she take so much upon herself. Instead, she should train "helpers" to assist her; in that way she could "be of more use" than by trying to personally teach too many pupils.²⁴

Madame Fretageot had not as yet received Maclure's letter of February 24, 1827, when she wrote to him on March 2, 1827. There is, however, little reason to suppose that the suggestions and admonitions his letter contained would have had any more effect upon her than had his previous efforts along those lines. For, as usual, she complained bitterly about several of her teaching colleagues, deriding Troost and Lesueur for their single-minded devotion to scientific research; and Phiquepal was castigated for being wholly incapable of effectively transmitting knowledge to his pupils. But it was Neef, of course, who continued to irritate her the most; so much so that she flatly warned Maclure: "If Neef is to stay I leave . . ., because it is quite impossible that I can ever agree with him." And, in a passage immediately following this threat, she made clear not only that the real issue between Neef and herself was the fundamental one of control of the schools, but that she expected Maclure to decide between the two of them. "I am, she wrote, "preparing teachers that will understand me. If I am to direct they will be ready for the tune. Consider

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 386-89.

that seriously and have your decision ready for your arrival."²⁵

While Madame Fretageot's continued inability to get along with Neef must have been upsetting to Maclure, that problem receded into the background immediately upon his return to New Harmony in the spring of 1827. He arrived on April 20, only ten days before a \$20,000 installment (half of the total sum still owed), was due the Rappites. When Frederick Rapp, Father Rapp's adopted son, came to town a few days later to collect the payment due, he informed Owen that "he was very much in want of money," and that "it would be extremely convenient" if the final payment, due a year later, could be paid at once. Since Rapp was ready, in exchange, to "make a fair deduction from the legal claim," Owen agreed, and turned to Maclure for the entire sum, who to Owen's "great surprise" refused to pay him "one dollar."²⁶

What lay behind Maclure's refusal was his realization that there would never be a better time to achieve a clearly defined and legally binding settlement with Owen. For, as Owen's demand for the money to pay Rapp made clear, none of Maclure's previous attempts to disabuse Owen of the idea

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 390-91.

²⁶ Robert Owen, Address Delivered by Robert Owen to Which is Added an Exposition of the Pecuniary Transactions Between that Gentleman and William M'Clure (Philadelphia: M.T.C. Gould and John Mortimer, 1827), pp. 32-33.

that they were full partners had succeeded. Furthermore, Owen was insisting that since he himself had "previously advanced about \$150,000," Maclure was at this point at least \$90,000 shy of matching him. As Maclure saw it, having already paid Owen \$38,000, he owed at most \$21,000--the \$11,000 due on the lease of the Education Society's property, plus the \$10,000 "forfeiture" he had agreed to pay toward whatever losses Owen had incurred since the two had joined forces.²⁷

Maclure proposed a compromise--one that would remove for good and all the threat of Owen's tampering with the affairs of the Education Society. He would at once pay the Rappites the entire sum due them, but in exchange Owen must give him the deed to the Education Society property, rather than the long term lease he now held. Owen indicated that he was willing to accept this solution, subject to the condition that the deed should stipulate that the property could only be used "to promote the objects of the social system." But Maclure was in no mood to enter into another vague agreement with Owen, especially one that might later be interpreted as giving Owen the right to intervene yet again in the Education Society's future affairs.²⁸

²⁷ Ibid., p. 32.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 33.

Maclure decided upon decisive action. He paid Rapp the entire amount due the Rappites, and received in exchange Owen's notes of indebtedness for the \$40,000. Having thereby become Owen's creditor, he immediately had charges filed against Owen for non-payment of debts. On the same day, April 30, 1827, he issued a public notice that stated that he was "determined not to pay" any of what Owen owed, "nor in any way whatever be responsible for any transactions he may have done or may attempt to do. . . ." Nor was that all. The county sheriff was induced by Thomas Say, acting in Maclure's behalf, to come to New Harmony to arrest Owen, "with express orders to take no bail whatever." Thus the community was briefly titillated by the spectacle of seeing its founder become a fugitive from justice. Owen successfully eluded the minion of the law, and once the sheriff had departed, he quickly retaliated by giving public notice of his side of the story. He insisted that the partnership was "in full force;" and he filed counter-charges against Maclure for the \$90,000 he claimed was due to match what he had invested.²⁹

That each man had deliberately assumed what he realized was an extreme position was made clear when they both quickly agreed to the appointment of two arbitrators, "one chosen by each party," who at once worked out a

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 30, 34.

solution. Under its terms Maclure was to pay Owen an additional \$5,000, in return for which Owen was to give him an unrestricted deed to the Education Society's property. These conditions were met the following day, May 3, 1827.³⁰

³⁰ Ibid., p. 35.

XIX

The Partnership Dissolves

Maclure had paid for the 490 acres that comprised the property of the Education Society a total of approximately \$93,000: the \$38,000 that he had previously paid Owen for the lease; the \$40,000, less interest, he had given Frederick Rapp for Owen's notes; and the extra \$5,000 the arbitrators had agreed upon. While he had once assessed the property's value as roughly one-fifth that sum, Maclure may by this time have felt he had not done so badly--for his financial settlement with Owen had also meant the dissolution of their partnership. Thus he was able to view with relative detachment the results of Owen's fifth community reorganization, which had been undertaken in January, 1827, when it had become only "too apparent to the trustees in whom the management was vested, that the establishment did not pay its own expenses"--any more than had it done so under the four previous forms of organization.¹

Deeming "some decisive change . . . necessary to arrest this continued loss of property," Owen had finally decided--though he did not admit it in so many words--to

¹New Harmony Gazette, II, No. 26 (March 28, 1827), 206.

abandon the "community system." Attributing the "deficiency of production" that had haunted the experiment from the outset to "carelessness in many members as regarding community property," Owen decided to reorganize on the basis of voluntary associations of "those individuals . . . who had mutual confidence in one another's intentions and mutual pleasure in one another's society."² To any group, however small, that chose to unite in this way, Owen offered to lease land, in proportion to their numbers, and to provide food and implements of husbandry to the extent that his "means would afford." The idea was, as Owen confessed later, to get rid of the many individuals "with whom none could be found to unite in Community;" for these persons had proved to be such a "great obstacle" to community progress that "it was necessary for the safety, comfort and happiness of those who remained, and for the success of the system itself, that they should remove."³

That Owen somewhere along the way had shelved his contention that the "community system" would work with the most unpromising human material was obvious. What was surprising was the openness with which he now made the further admission that the real factors behind his decision

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., II, No. 32 (May 9, 1827), 254-55.

to reorganize once more were his unwillingness to assume the expense of removing the undesirables, and the awkwardness involved in "informing them that they were not such members as would be admitted into Communities."⁴

Unfortunately, Owen's new-found ability to face unpleasant facts, and even to jettison some of his ideological baggage, produced, as he himself noted, only one positive result, which was that "many families left New Harmony with their feelings more or less hurt." And on hand to make the situation even more uncomfortable was Paul Brown. Never one to allow Owen to get away with anything, Brown went around town denouncing him in the most dramatic terms. As Brown put it, Owen's latest reorganization meant "doomsday" to those persons unable to find others ready to associate with them. And Brown added that since Owen had, in effect, peremptorily handed these unfortunates their "walking papers," human decency surely demanded that he pay their traveling expenses.⁵

One effect of Owen's fifth reorganizational plan was truly mortifying. By posing as a genuine communitarian, a man named William G. Taylor managed to gain Owen's confidence to the extent of obtaining another of those ten thousand year

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Paul Brown, Twelve Months in New Harmony (Cincinnati: William Hill Woodward, 1827), p. 85.

leases he had a penchant for issuing. Unlike Maclure, Taylor voiced no objection to allowing Owen to include in the lease a vague restrictive clause that suggested the perpetuation of the community system. For it was another loosely worded part of the agreement that actually interested Taylor: by its terms he was to receive from Owen fifteen hundred acres of land "with all thereon." The night before the agreement was to go into effect, Taylor secretly garnered together on his plot of land all the agricultural equipment and livestock he could find. Then, the following morning, he claimed that, because of the key clause in his contract with Owen, everything on his land had legally become his possessions. To Owen's further dismay, Taylor next established a distillery on his newly-leased property, from which base of operations he continued to harass Owen in a variety of ways. In the end it was only after expensive litigation and heavy financial loss on Owen's part that he was able to rid himself of his agreement with Taylor.⁶

Maclure, having himself legally absolved his painful and expensive association with Owen, undoubtedly felt that his former partner's further troubles were neither unpredictable nor undeserved, and as such, not worthy of

⁶Letter from Richard Owen to John Holliday: quoted in George B. Lockwood, The New Harmony Movement (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1905), p. 156. See also: Arthur E. Bestor, Backwoods Utopias (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, c. 1950), p. 195.

much attention. But he had to take umbrage over Owen's renewed and more specific attacks on the educational community. For even though Owen had been forced by circumstances to discard the "community system" in New Harmony, he was as unwilling as was Maclure to admit the possibility that the system itself might be flawed. Instead, he decided that, although the population had contained much unpromising material, the primary reason for the experiment's failure had been the inability of Maclure and the rest of the educators to live up to his "high expectations." In a speech he delivered in New Harmony Hall on May 6, 1827, Owen expanded on this point:

Although many who were here at that time were unprepared to be members of a Community of common property and equality, yet there was much good feeling among the population generally,--and, if the Schools had been in full operation, upon the very superior plan which I had been led to expect, so as to convince the parents by ocular demonstration of the benefits which their children would immediately derive from the system, it would have been, I think, practicable, even with such materials, with the patience and perseverance which would have been applied to the object, to have succeeded in amalgamating the whole into a Community.

You also know, that the chief difficulty at this time arose from the difference of opinion among the Professors and Teachers brought here by Mr. Maclure, relative to the education of the children, and to the consequent delay in putting any one of their systems into practice.

Having been led to entertain very high expectations of the abilities of these individuals, I looked to them to establish very superior arrangements for the instruction of all ages, and I was induced to suppose, that the population would be compensated for the delay in the execution, by the unequalled excellence of the system when put into practice. But, in consequence of the unlimited confidence which I placed in these individuals to execute

this the most important part of the plan, in a very superior manner, you all know how much I have been disappointed. Instead of forming one well-digested arrangement, in which all the children should have the benefit of the superior qualifications possessed by each Professor and Instructor,--each . . . Teacher undertook the entire instruction of a certain number of pupils, by which arrangement they were prevented from associating with the other pupils.

By this error in their practice, the object, which I had the most at heart, could not be attained: the children were educated in different habits, dispositions and feelings,--when it was my most earnest desire, that all the children should be educated in similar habits and dispositions, and be brought up truly as members of one large family, without a single discordant feeling.⁷

While he admitted that "each of the Professors and . . . Teachers possessed considerable abilities and acquirements in particular branches of education," Owen forgot his former faith in the ability of any person, however untrained, who exhibited humane impulses to be an effective teacher. He now insisted that it took "the union of the best qualities and qualifications of several of even the best modern teachers . . . to form the character of the rising generation as it ought to be formed. . . ."⁸

There could be no denying that Maclure and his teaching staff had failed to achieve a sufficient degree of co-operation among themselves to allow for the implementation of the departmentalized type program of education which had originally been intended. But Owen's assertion that this

⁷New Harmony Gazette, II, No. 32 (May 9, 1827), 254.

⁸Ibid.

was the major flaw in the experiment was an obvious attempt to find a scapegoat; and his talk of having waited "patiently" for those changes in the educational format that would have allowed him to "make progress" toward his objectives was stretching a point to say the least.⁹ At the outset, he had shown comparatively mild interest in the educational phase of the experiment. This is clear from his having so readily given Maclure complete control of the schools and the curriculum. It was very late in the day before he seized upon the educators as the villains in the piece.

Yet so intent had Owen now become to single out the Education Society for censure that he called upon the services of one James M. Dorsey, newly arrived former treasurer of Miami University, in whose "steadiness, integrity, ability and disinterested devotion to the cause" of education Owen claimed to have "full confidence." Owen gave Dorsey the sum of \$3,000 with instructions to use the money to establish an educational system in opposition to that of Maclure's. But the gesture, whether animated by sincerity or spite on Owen's part, failed to enrage Maclure, primarily because it was a futile one. For although Dorsey did serve Owen faithfully and well in business matters, he never did bring a rival system of schools into existence--probably because the

⁹Ibid.

"community system" was clearly in its death throes and there were insufficient pupils to be had.¹⁰

On June 1, 1827, Owen left the scene. Characteristically, only five days before departing, on May 27, 1827, he addressed what he fancifully termed "the Ten Social Colonies of Equality and Common Property, forming on the New Harmony Estate." His use of the future tense is revealing: the only organizations that could be truly considered as formed were the Education Society and Feiba-Peveli, Macluria having already been disbanded. To reach the figure of ten, he had included, in addition to those two actual organizations, the town itself, which even he admitted must "remain sometime longer a training school" before it could qualify as a true community. The other seven "colonies" consisted of: Taylor's property; Macluria's abandoned dwellings; a single log cabin that housed four families; a group of three or four families of German extraction living near one another; and finally, three widely scattered shacks, each inhabited by a single family.¹¹

The content of Owen's farewell speech reflected the same combination of optimism and exaggeration that had led him to describe the already moribund experiment as "ten

¹⁰ Ibid., II, No. 35 (May 30, 1827), 279.

¹¹ Brown, p. 122.

social colonies." Complimenting his audience for having "relinquished the old institutions of society" and "entered upon a new state of society," he went on to paint a glowing picture of what the future held, provided only that his hearers honestly apply those "principles in strict accordance with human nature," which he had "abundantly explained" to them. His hearers were, he assured them, "rapidly overcoming . . . the difficulties attendant on the commencement of this mighty change in the affairs of men;" and the unavoidably disagreeable and rough work, which "the nature of the country" and the type of person who had first congregated in the community had "rendered necessary," was "daily diminishing." The qualities of "industry, economy, beauty, order, and good feeling" that were "silently and gradually growing up" on all sides were "gaining ground" to such an extent that "soon" the example of New Harmony could not "fail to become general." Warning that "little that is deserving the name of real virtue can be found in common or individual society, and no intercourse can be had with it, without producing contamination," Owen concluded his remarks by urging that the community's purity be further reenforced by pitying the "ignorance and infirmities" of those on hand whose minds were "too limited to grasp the momentous change, which the community system is calculated

to accomplish for the improvement and happiness of mankind."¹²

Owen would surely have included Maclure among those he urged be pitied and shown "an example of forbearance and kindness."¹³ Yet the future relations between the two men were, considering the manner in which their partnership had been dissolved, surprisingly amiable. Owen admitted that he had "somewhat irritated Mr. Maclure" by having "made . . . arrangements independently of him" to establish in New Harmony "a system of education different from his own;" and he condescendingly added that it was not surprising since Maclure was "an old man, a rich man" who was susceptible to having his feelings "worked up by those around him into a state very much beyond rationality." However, since Maclure had already "done a great deal of good" and intended to do a great deal more, Owen was ready to forgive him. In fact, just prior to leaving New Harmony, Owen paid him a courtesy call to find out if he "could do anything for him in the eastern cities or in Great Britain."¹⁴

As far as Maclure was concerned, once his financial

¹² New Harmony Gazette, II, No. 35 (May 30, 1827), 278-79.

¹³ Ibid., II, p. 279.

¹⁴ Robert Owen, Address Delivered by Robert Owen to Which Is Added an Exposition of the Pecuniary Transactions Between that Gentleman and William M'Clure (Philadelphia: M.T.C. Gould and John Mortimer, 1827), pp. 31, 35-36.

affairs were no longer entangled with Owen's schemes, he was apparently almost as willing as Owen was to forgive and forget. Though his future responses to all solicitations for various reforms did reflect a once bitten, twice shy attitude, Maclure was able to look back upon his association with Owen with a remarkable lack of bitterness. He even found himself capable of expressing a detached sympathy for the latter's further millennial schemes--so long as Owen made no effort to enlist his aid in achieving them.

That, in spite of past events, Owen might have had the temerity to do just that was not inconsistent with his ebullient nature. Nor was it to be expected that his New Harmony experience would have extinguished or even dampened his reformist zeal; his obvious need to find something to blame for the experiment's failure other than his own mistakes or the community system itself had made that clear. So when, on January 22, 1829, more than a year and a half after their association at New Harmony had ended, he "popped in" on Maclure, who was then staying at a hotel in Jalapa, Mexico, his visit came as no real surprise. This time Owen was involved in a plan to have the state of Texas leased to him by the Mexican government, in order that he might there put his theories into operation once more. What astonished Maclure far more than "this unexpected visit" was the fact that Owen carried "strong commendatory letters" of intro-

duction to all the Mexican authorities from some of the most important "men in power" in Europe as well as from ministers of the British government.¹⁵

Maclure found Owen "completely disgusted with the U.S." but still full of "all his usual certainty of success in practice." And, letters of recommendation or not, Maclure did not think Owen had any chance to gain the assistance of influential Mexicans. He noted of the latter's plans:

So long as he stops at theory all will do well. But should he attempt practice, the second edition of New Harmony will most probably be published to the world contradicting his theories and bringing loss and disappointment on all that have placed faith and confidence in him.¹⁶

Obviously Maclure still remembered all too well the fate of the New Harmony experiment. If Owen had entertained any hope of enlisting his aid in this Mexican adventure--and, in the light of Owen's having sought Maclure out at his hotel, it is easy to suspect that he did--he never actually broached the subject. Neither did the two ever meet again, though Maclure continued to keep track of his former associate's adventures--of which the Texas scheme was only one of several--as reported in the newspapers.

¹⁵"Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot 1820-1833," ed. Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., Indiana Historical Society Publications, XV, No. 3 (1948), 403-04.

¹⁶Ibid.

XX

Scaled Down Reforms

Owen's departure from New Harmony on June 1, 1827 marked the end of any real interest in the experiment on his part. True, he did manage in the course of his travels to pay the town a couple of widely spaced visits, but that was undoubtedly because his sons all stayed on to play roles of varying length and importance in the community.

Amiable parting or not, Maclure was greatly relieved to see Owen go. The latter's having left may have had a lot to do with Maclure's deciding to remain in New Harmony continuously from April 20, 1827, till December, 1827, by far the longest continuous stretch of time he ever spent there. And during this period his interest and participation in the community's educational and scientific projects was never greater. If Owen's leaving had created a vacuum of leadership and planning, Maclure was ready and eager to take steps to remedy the situation--and if his plans were much reduced from Owen's in scope, they made up for that by being far more specific.

The fact that the community system was no longer in existence in New Harmony created a problem to which James Dorsey, though armed with Owen's \$3,000, could find no

solution: that of rounding up a student body. Maclure's answer, which he had previously hinted at in his correspondence with Madame Fretageot, was to establish a school that he was determined would have at least one thing in its favor: it would be completely free from the interference of meddlesome, ignorant parents. For Maclure planned a school devoted to "the instruction of Orphans in all useful knowledge as well as in the useful arts." Giving it the title "The School of Industry," Maclure first advertised its existence in the May 16, 1827 issue of the Gazette, adding that it was prepared to accept as pupils "a few of both sexes, not under the age of twelve years."¹ Chemical and physics laboratories were to be utilized by the students, but the education to be provided was intended to be anything but specialized or esoteric. Far from it. A later announcement, referring to the school as "Maclure's Seminary," described the rigorous daily routine as follows:

Young men and women are received without any expense to them, either for teaching, or food, lodging and clothing. Hours, from five in the morning until eight in the evening, divided as follows: The scholars rise at five; at half past five each goes to his occupation; at seven the bell rings for breakfast; at eight they return to work; at eleven their lessons begin, continuing until half past two, including half an hour for luncheon; then they return to their occupation until five, when a bell calls them to dinner.* Afterwards until half past six

¹New Harmony Gazette, II, No. 32 (May 16, 1827),

they exercise themselves in various ways; then the evening lessons begin, and last until eight.²

Actually the institution represented Maclure's commitment to the idea central to his thought on the matter of effecting wholesale educational reform: that schools could become self-supporting. The same announcement that depicted the students' spartan schedule went on to add: "The basis of the institution is that the scholars repay their expenses from the proceeds of their seven hours labor, but to effect this will require several years more."³ This condition was never achieved, although the school did compensate Maclure for his faith in it by producing several excellent examples of its competency in the form of various publications from its printing press.

Further proof of just how completely Maclure was able to become preoccupied with educational matters once his problems with Owen were ended came in the form of an essay he now took it upon himself to write. Titled "On Education," a portion of it appeared in the Gazette of June 20, 1827. It was, however, of such length that although excerpts from it continued to be published weekly, it was not until the December 5, 1827 issue that it was concluded.

² Harry B. Weiss and Grace M. Ziegler, Thomas Say (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1931), p. 131.

³ Ibid.

Nor did Maclure neglect scientific and book publishing projects. By August 29, 1827, the necessary arrangements had been made to publish Charles Lesueur's Fish of North America, with, the Gazette noted, "plates, drawn and colored from Nature."⁴ Only six weeks later the announcement was made in the Gazette of similar plans to publish Thomas Say's American Conchology.

Then on January 16, 1828 appeared the first issue of a new journal, The Disseminator of Useful Knowledge; Containing Hints to the Youth of the United States--From the School of Industry. Sponsored by Maclure, whose editorials appeared in it frequently, and edited by Thomas Say, the Disseminator published material intended to provide practical education as well as items of scientific interest. When the Gazette discontinued publication in March, 1829, and transferred its base of operations to New York (changing its name to The Free Enquirer in the process), the Disseminator became the community's sole publication. However, it disdained to an even greater extent than had the Gazette from concerning itself with local affairs, and so could hardly be considered a community newspaper in the modern sense. It was initially published twice a month, and ran sixteen pages per issue. Later it became a weekly,

⁴New Harmony Gazette, II, No. 47 (August 29, 1827),

but it was reduced to folio form. The usual number of issues printed was three hundred, and efforts to achieve more subscribers were disappointing. Still, the paper continued to be published until June 25, 1831, when, along with the School of Industry, under whose auspices it had been printed, it was discontinued.

Though his support and encouragement were vital to all these projects, and though he gave it without hesitation, Maclure could not abide the New Harmony climate to the extent of remaining there throughout the winter months. New Orleans having proved uncongenial to him because of his dislike of the institution of slavery, he went to Mexico during the winter of 1827-28. He returned to the United States again in 1828, but from December of that year until his death he resided in Mexico, being, he wrote, delighted by that fine climate and "no ways frightened at their revolutions."⁵

In fact, as far as Maclure was concerned, "an active revolution" was just what Mexico needed. It would, he believed, not only bring forth the "energy and industry" which were lacking there, but also be "bad for the rich, but in favor of equality and the poor." That he himself

⁵Letter from William Maclure to LeCount Lasterie: March 28, 1829 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

was eminently qualified to be classified as one of the rich for whom the revolution might be "bad" did not seem to trouble him: he lived frugally enough, and most of his holdings were not on Mexican soil. Perhaps, too, he thought of himself as exempt from revolutionary ire by virtue of his record of activities on behalf of the productive class; for no sooner had he settled in a suburb of Mexico City than he informed his friends that he had begun yet another educational enterprise, this time, as he put it, "endeavoring to give education to as many of the native Indian race as I can." This included sending several of the more promising native boys to New Harmony. "The native Indian," he wrote, was now the only class in which he could "feeel any interest," because it was "the best and most useful" he had ever come across. It was, he further observed, "a stigma on civilization to be forced to go so far from it to find worth and merit."⁶

William chose neither his brother Alexander nor either of his two sisters, all of whom continued to reside in New Harmony, to manage his affairs during his protracted absence. Instead, he divided responsibility between Thomas Say and Madame Fretageot. Say was put in charge of guiding the scientific work as well as editing the Disseminator;

⁶ Ibid.

while Madame was made Maclure's business agent, receiving from him his power of attorney on the occasion of his departure for Mexico in December, 1827.

Say's appointment met with universal approval from the outset. In the case of Madame Fretageot, however, this was not so. William's relatives resented being passed over; and there was never a lack of critics of Madame's performance of her duties, nor was there ever a paucity of volunteers ready to take her place should William but say the word. But he did not. Quite the contrary, in fact. In a letter he wrote to Say in 1830 he touched on the wisdom of his choice of her to represent his business interest, and stated his determination that she never be deprived of the management of his business affairs in New Harmony as long as he lived.⁷

As for relations between the two agents themselves, they were much better than what might have been expected. Maclure may have been a bit apprehensive on the score, for in a letter dated October 17, 1828, Madame Fretageot felt it necessary to assure him that he "need not recomend" her "to be kind to Mr. Say," for she had always liked him "very

⁷Letter from William Maclure to Thomas Say, quoted in Weiss and Ziegler, Thomas Say, p. 142.

much;"⁸ and in another letter written several weeks later she informed Maclure that Say had been taken ill, and added that she loved Say "like a brother."⁹

Nor was this all just rhetoric, for when both Say and his wife Lucy became sick, Madame Fretageot had them brought to live with her in Maclure's mansion, where she and her pupils took care of them for over a month. And although, after five weeks of nursing the couple, she did become suspicious that Lucy was prolonging her illness as a means of escaping housekeeping chores,¹⁰ the worst thing she ever attributed to Say was that he was "as timorous as a mouse."¹¹

Right up until the time she left the community Madame Fretageot's letters to Maclure consistently mentioned Say in favorable terms. She deemed him highly capable as the editor of the Disseminator, and worried over the paper's fate should

⁸ Letter from Marie Duclos Fretageot to William Maclure: October 17, 1828 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

⁹ Letter from Marie Duclos Fretageot to William Maclure: November 28, 1828 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

¹⁰ Letter from Marie Duclos Fretageot to William Maclure: December 18, 1828 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

¹¹ Letter from Marie Duclos Fretageot to William Maclure: March 15, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

he ever be induced by his wife to abandon the community.¹²
 In a letter to Maclure she admitted: "I think Say very
 worthy of your esteem and have thought many times that he
 deserves to be my partner in your affairs;"¹³ and she added
 that without Say to share responsibilities with her, she
 did not know how she "could go on to the public satisfac-
 tion."¹⁴

Madame Fretageot was much impressed by Say's lack
 of interest in accruing wealth. She realized that his dis-
 like of business affairs matched her enjoyment in them; but
 she was amazed when he declined a salary she offered him,
 telling her that he did "not like money," and that except
 for books he had everything he wanted.¹⁵

But the best proof of the extent of Madame Fretageot's
 unflagging respect for Say lies in her last important act as

¹²Letter from Marie Duclos Fretageot to William
 Maclure: September 29, 1830. See also her letters to
 W. Maclure dated June 19, 1830 and July 27, 1830 (In the
 Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

¹³Letter from Marie Duclos Fretageot to William
 Maclure: December 13, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute,
 New Harmony, Indiana).

¹⁴Letter from Marie Duclos Fretageot to William
 Maclure: November 29, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute,
 New Harmony, Indiana).

¹⁵Letter from Marie Duclos Fretageot to William
 Maclure: December 26, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute,
 New Harmony, Indiana).

a member of the community. On November 8, 1831 she wrote to Maclure that having found herself "in a very weak state of health," and being desirous of going to France to settle her own business affairs, she had decided to leave New Harmony. Before leaving, however, she had appointed Say as her "substitute." She knew that he had no heart for the task; but she was convinced, she informed Maclure, that he would "do well." She realized that Say's loyalty to Maclure equalled her own; and in making him her substitute without consulting Maclure she was paying him the highest compliment of which she was capable.¹⁶

On his part, Say must have returned some of the liking Madame Fretageot had for him. However, since Say, as she had once noted "would rather run ten miles . . . than write a letter,"¹⁷ there is less written evidence that this was so. And, given the nature of her personality, it is almost impossible to believe that she did not get on Say's nerves now and then. Yet, when it was her turn to become ill Say and his wife were both very attentive to her;¹⁸

¹⁶ Letter from Marie Duclos Fretageot to William Maclure: November 8, 1831 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

¹⁷ Letter from M. Fretageot to W. Maclure: November 28, 1828.

¹⁸ Letter from Marie Duclos Fretageot to William Maclure: October 3, 1831 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

and there can be no doubt that once she had departed, he sorely missed her, if only because of the added duties involved in acting as her "substitute." Having elicited a promise from her that she would come back to New Harmony, Say wrote one of his rare letters to her while she was in Paris. He ruefully complained of his having to "attend to the troubles and perplexities that seem to thicken here," and termed her anticipated return "the promised era of my deliverance."¹⁹

A number of correspondents besides his two chosen agents kept Maclure thoroughly posted on affairs in New Harmony. Many of those who wrote to him also did their best to keep his appetite for reform whetted--especially if the particular reform in question required financial assistance on his part. Some of the proposals were sweeping in nature, as for instance Robert Dale Owen's impassioned pleas that Maclure subsidize the New York Daily Sentinel, a newspaper devoted to the cause of the working man.²⁰ Others were more personal, like the request from Neef's son,

¹⁹Letter from Thomas Say to Marie Duclos Fretageot, quoted in Weiss and Ziegler, Thomas Say, p. 157.

²⁰Letter from Robert Dale Owen to Reuben Haines, sent by Haines to William Maclure at R. D. Owen's suggestion: August 5, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana). See also: Letter from Robert Dale Owen to William Maclure: September 4, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

Victor, and Balthaser Obernesser, a former pupil in the New Harmony schools, that Maclure "be so kind" as to make them "a present" of some of the land he owned along the Wabash.²¹ Nor was Maclure spared financial pleas that presumed on blood relationship: his brother, Alexander, was in constant need of funds to support various business ventures that lacked only a "small loan" from William to insure their success.²²

The supplicants used a wide variety of methods in attempting to get Maclure to undo the strings on his still sizeable purse. Robert Dale Owen tried to touch all the motivational bases; and in the process he managed to reveal a good deal about his assessment of Maclure's character. Referring to Maclure somewhat condescendingly as that "good old man," Robert Dale wrote to a third party that he wanted Maclure to be made aware that while the Sentinel would almost surely "fall through if not supported, it might well be a profitable concern in a year or two." As Robert Dale saw it, Maclure's money was being "lost to society" while he hibernated in Mexico, and only "a small fraction of it"

²¹Letter from Victor Neef and Balthaser Obernesser to William Maclure: December 12, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

²²Letter from Alexander Maclure to William Maclure: October 18, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

would be needed to save this unique paper, one that the working classes looked upon as their "sheet anchor." Furthermore, Maclure "could not possibly have a better or more influential medium through which to give his political opinions to the world." Unlike the Disseminator, which Robert Dale dismissed as having less than fifty subscribers, and being therefore incapable of achieving general influence throughout the country, the Sentinel offered a platform from which "true principles might be spread from one end of the republic to another." By continuing to moulder in Mexico, Maclure was, in Robert Dale's opinion, "lost to the cause of human improvement;" when for a mere \$5,000 he could not only save the paper from going under, and obtain a national audience for his views, but also might add ten years to his life by coming out of retirement to "witness the spirit that is abroad here, among the working classes."²³

When a month went by with no reply, Robert Dale apparently had second thoughts concerning the roundabout method he initially chose to get his appeal on behalf of the Sentinel to Maclure's attention. So he wrote directly to the "good old man" pleading for a loan to the Sentinel of \$6,000 to \$8,000, and explaining that the reason he did

²³Letter from Robert Dale Owen to Reuben Haines, sent by Haines to William Maclure at R. D. Owen's suggestion: August 5, 1830.

not come to the paper's assistance himself was that his "every dollar" was "necessarily invested" in the Free Enquirer. Frankly admitting that while what was proposed "might not be full security to a merchant," Robert Dale added: "But I do not write to you as a merchant, but as one whose capital has often been risked for the promotion of the very objects the Sentinel now supports." And as a final inducement, Robert Dale suggested that Thomas Say might make a good editor.²⁴

Victor Neef and his friend Balthaser Obernesser also employed a sort of ingratiating frankness as a means to get under Maclure's guard. Presuming on no greater claim than their former status as pupils in Maclure's school, the two young men did have the grace to admit that William might "consider it a blind & adventurous confidence" on their part to ask him for an outright gift of some of his land, especially since Balthaser had run off from Madame Fretageot's tutelage to become an itinerant house-painter. But Balthaser was, of course, "sorry, very sorry;" besides Maclure owned "plenty of land on the Wabash." Furthermore, they were ready to promise to "try to make good use" of the farmland they hoped would be given them.

²⁴ Letter from Robert Dale Owen to William Maclure: September 4, 1830.

Yet Balthaser was not above concluding the request with a postscript designed to prompt Maclure to comply, if only out of a sense of obligation. "I think you should remember," wrote the would-be farmer, "that I came away from home with you, and I think that you should not forget me altogether."²⁵

Alexander Maclure, as William's only brother and a major beneficiary, was certainly far more entitled than the two ex-students to lay written siege to his older brother's generosity. But the manner in which he did so, using an air of bruised pride and self-depreciating mockery to make more palatable his requests for funds, must have taxed William's patience considerably. In a letter dated October 18, 1830, Alexander immediately took the offensive by asserting that William, being rich, could well afford to pay whatever postage was going to be due on it. He then noted sarcastically that he had just been forced to sell his interest in a local store for the "triffling reason" that he had lacked the capital to carry it on. Nor, in his "straightened" condition was he able to operate "to the best advantage" the tannery he had established. "The good people of your famed Town of New Harmony," Alexander wrote, "accustomed to see almost everything fails, that has been attempted to

²⁵Letter from Victor Neef and Balthaser Obernesser to William Maclure: December 12, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

be done," had "prognosticated" that of course the tannery would fail too. But he was, he assured William, determined not only to disregard the townspeoples' "wise saws," but "to punish the rogues in good time" by getting them to buy from him rather than send all the way to Cincinnati for their leather goods. All that was standing in the way of his achieving this was his "want of means," a condition which William might easily rectify. He was willing, he assured his older brother, to pay 6% interest on whatever sum was lent him, a rate he did not think was being matched by any of the "Public Securities" in which William had his funds invested; and since he sincerely believed that William's money would be "just as safe" in his hands as in any government stocks whatsoever, this was really not so much a favor as a sound business investment. However, should William wish it, he had no objection to giving him a mortgage on the tannery as collateral on the loan.²⁶

But such beseechings for William's financial assistance now all met the same fate. However skillfully couched, they were ignored; for he had become far too wary and disillusioned to comply. The cost, both financial and emotional, of his unhappy association with Robert Owen had apparently been the last straw. And if he needed any additional

²⁶Letter from Alexander Maclure to William Maclure: October 18, 1830.

reminders of the state of unreadiness of mankind for immediate and sweeping reforms of a socialistic nature, there was the eventual weeding out of all vestiges of socialism in the aftermath of the New Harmony experiment to constantly refresh his memory.

XXI

Still "Propagating the Pestalozzian"

Robert Owen's departure from New Harmony had been the signal for capitalism to once again assume there a mantle of respectability. The notorious William Taylor had, even prior to Owen's leaving, done his best to introduce it--with, it must be said, some degree of success in terms of personal profit. However, since his version had involved the sale of strong spirits, it had not achieved anything like community-wide approval. Ironically, it was the Owen family itself, though it did first manage to rid the community of the Taylor & Co. concern, who brought New Harmony into the capitalistic mainstream once more. For no sooner had the property originally leased to Taylor been re-acquired than it was subdivided and sold, as an envious Alexander Maclure reported to his brother William, in lots "at prices considered high," but attractive to buyers because they were "free from all restrictions" that the property must be used only in socialistic ventures.¹

However contrary to Robert Owen's original intentions,

¹Letter from Alexander Maclure to William Maclure: May 6 and 10, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

this strategy of lifting restrictions provided a clear cut test of the townspeople's attitude toward the re-introduction of capitalism. Before Maclure, far away in Mexico, could, in like manner, remove similar restrictions on the land he owned, the contrast between the Owen side of town owned by the Owen family and that belonging to Maclure became readily apparent. The former section was judged by one citizen to immediately begin to "look better than it did," with many frame houses being repaired, "and some of the fences made new."² And Alexander Maclure, who certainly could never be accused of boosterism, informed his absent brother that on Owen's property "individuals begin to improve their lotts with handsome pailings and Gardings."³

Nor was this the only proof of capitalism's renewed popularity. On the Owen side of town five new stores quickly cropped up. So popular, in fact, did the practice of "starting stores and groceries" now become that even so redoubtable a socialist as Madame Fretageot gave more than a passing thought to launching into such a venture herself. She talked of starting a store in community house "No. 2,"

²Letter from Allen Ward to Achilles Fretageot: July 8, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

³Letter from Alexander Maclure to William Maclure: May 6 and 10, 1830.

and actually carried her plans to the stage of arranging to have James Bennett, a former student, buy goods for the business in Cincinnati.⁴ Although in her case the idea was eventually abandoned, it was obvious that New Harmony's romance with socialism had gone completely flat. Alexander, correctly assessing the mood of the townspeople, wrote to brother William:

I should like to see your side of the town assume improved appearance also but I do not think this will take place untill you also take off the restrictions. . . . I would suggest the propriety of you at all events leaving it discretionary with Madame to do so. . . .⁵

In this rare instance William experienced no qualms about taking his younger brother's advice. Nor did the abandonment of socialistic practices by the New Harmony citizenry upset him. It was not that his interest in the welfare of "those who work with their hands" had diminished. But he had apparently decided that he would never again in his lifetime risk disappointment by lending his support to precipitant or overly-ambitious reformatory projects. Instead he began to devote considerable attention to the framing of bequests in his will that he thought would be

⁴Letter from Allen Ward to Achilles Fretageot: July 8, 1830. See also: Letter from James Bennett to Achilles Fretageot: September 19, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

⁵Letter from Alexander Maclure to William Maclure: May 6 and 10, 1830.

most likely to prove of lasting assistance to the working class. To this end he tinkered with that document constantly, revising it as this or that organization pleased or displeased him, or as he thought of yet another new way to circumvent his nagging fear that somehow the working class would be deprived of whatever bequests he made on its behalf. He was very much afraid that no matter how carefully he worded his will, his wishes might in the end be thwarted; for he was, as he noted in his final codicil, highly suspicious of that "melancholy state of morality which prevents dead men's wills from being fulfilled or executed when they give any property for the use and benefit of the poor and working classes."⁶

Except in the matter of what would happen to his wealth after his death, Maclure was, with one final exception, impervious to all efforts to again enlist either himself or his money in the active ranks of reform. Among those who tried to coax him back into the thick of things was none other than Frances Wright, who had earlier shown her respect for him by appointing him one of the trustees of her ill-fated Nashoba community. In a letter dated January 3, 1830, in which she enclosed several copies of

⁶The quotations are from William Maclure's last will, quoted in J. P. Dunn, The Libraries of Indiana (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Burford, 1893), p. 13.

the Free Enquirer, of which she and Robert Dale Owen were co-editors, she urged him to re-visit Philadelphia and New York, "the headquarters of our reformers." "The whole country," she wrote, "is awakening, . . . & merits the attention of a mind like yours."⁷

But moderation had become William's byword. His health was beginning to fail, and there was always the painful memory of those many costly reformatory ventures that had brought him only frustration and embarrassment. In Mexico he had found a climate that agreed with him. He was content to sponsor at long distance the School of Industry and the Disseminator. Neither project required any large expenditures, and both were under the immediate supervision of friends he trusted and respected. Even so, his never completely quiescent business sense occasionally came to the fore. While he was able to accept with philosophic detachment the poor sales of his own three volume work, Opinions on Various Subjects, he heartily encouraged the device of sending agents out into the countryside to peddle everything that came off the New Harmony presses, from copies of hand engraved scientific works, to sub-

⁷Letter from Frances Wright to William Maclure: January 3, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

scriptions for the Disseminator, to his own sadly rejected writings.⁸

With each passing year the pulse of reformative zeal seemed to beat fainter in Maclure. When Madame Fretageot's waning health led to the discontinuance of the School of Industry, he was not unduly dismayed. Nor did the demise of the Disseminator cause him to feel the deep sense of mortification such blighted projects had once engendered in him. And Madame Fretageot's death in Vera Cruz in April, 1833, while on the way to visit him, can only have added to his sense of isolation. He made no effort to find someone to take her place, though there was no lack of candidates available. Say, staying loyally at his post in New Harmony to the end, died the following year. Again, Maclure made no attempt to secure another "agent" to look after his affairs. Clearly, his interest in reformative ventures was moribund.

Still, isolated though he was in Mexico City, and reticent as he had obviously become to get involved, reformative projects continued to be brought to Maclure's attention. Apparently his past record of being a soft touch, coupled with the widespread belief by acquaintances

⁸Letter from William P. Bennett to William Maclure: August 4, 1830 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

that, as Robert Dale Owen had once noted, William's wealth was being wasted to the cause of reform, made him an attractive target. Robert Dale himself, as late as August, 1834, had not given up. He even managed to win the support of William's usually far less receptive brother Alexander for a plan to establish a manual labor college at New Harmony; but William proved as immune to the idea as did the general public.⁹

There was, however, to be one final project in which William became involved. It illustrated three aspects of his thought: (1) the extreme caution with which experience had taught him to approach any reformative scheme; (2) the unwholesome degree to which he was ready to accept a paternal role--despite his surface espousal of the concepts of equality and leveling; and (3) his lasting faith in the efficacy of Pestalozzian methodology.

The project was--surprisingly enough, considering his long absence from New Harmony and his disinclination to become involved in any new schemes--originally given impetus by Maclure himself. The plan did, however, have roots that extended back into the time when he had been both present and active in community affairs. In April,

⁹Letters from Alexander Maclure to William Maclure: August 14, 1834 and December 8, 1834 (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

1828, it had been noted in the Disseminator that a room in community house No. 2 had been set aside for the use of the Society for Mutual Instruction. This society's membership was composed mainly of "operatives" who resided in New Harmony. Its object was termed:

. . . exactly the same as the mechanic's institutions of this country and Europe, namely: to communicate a general knowledge of the arts and sciences to those persons who hitherto had been excluded from a scientific or general education by the erroneous and narrow-minded policy of colleges and public schools, who have invariably endeavoured to tyrannize over the uneducated many.¹⁰

Maclure thought highly of this sort of organization, and when the one at New Harmony appeared to be dying out of inertia, he was naturally disappointed. So much so that he decided to try to breathe new life into the concept, if not the particular society in question. He wrote a letter to Achilles Fretageot in which he expressed his confidence that the working classes of New Harmony were as well informed of their true interests as any other workers in the United States. He then went on to offer to endow them with a house and land and "other necessities to make a beginning." He authorized Achilles to consult with the "best informed" amongst them in order to "find out their opinions and what they would propose." The institute that Maclure hoped

¹⁰ The Disseminator of Useful Knowledge, I, No. 8 (April 26, 1828), 121.

would come out of this was to be "solely meant for self-instruction, and not to depend on any learned professor or superior; but to be managed to the interest of all."

Maclure explained that he wanted the institute at New Harmony "to be a model for others"--the first of as many such associations as his means "could well accomplish."¹¹

In another letter to Achilles, Maclure became more specific. He wanted his proposed institute's membership to include not less than thirty persons, all of whom had to "work with their hands" in order to qualify.¹²

Armed with the promise of Maclure's material assistance, Achilles apparently worked at reviving interest in self-instruction among the New Harmony artisans. By April 2, 1838 a constitution had been written for the New Harmony Workingmen's Institute for Mutual Instruction. Its preamble was couched in terms that must have gladdened Maclure's heart. It stated:

Believing that working men have never yet held that rank in Society which their usefulness entitles them to, and that their Education has rarely been such as to enable them to use their faculties in the best manner for their pecuniary benefit, or the most rational enjoyment of life; in order to attain those objects more fully than we have yet done, and to bring scientific and all

¹¹ Undated letter from William Maclure to Achilles Fretageot (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

¹² Undated letter from William Maclure to Achilles Fretageot (In the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana).

other useful knowledge within the reach of Manual and Mechanical Laborers, without the aid of professional men as teachers, we have agreed to form ourselves into a Society for Mutual Instruction, by means of Reading, Lectures, Experiments, &c.¹³

The constitution was to go into effect when it had achieved twenty signers. Conditions of membership were not at all severe. Any man over the age of eighteen who obtained his living "by the labor of his hands" was eligible. There was also a one dollar entrance fee and monthly dues of 25 cents; but due to "the pressure of the times" the entrance fee was made payable in four weekly installments.¹⁴

The combination of easy entrance requirements, coupled with a gift from Maclure of \$1,000 worth of books and the vague promise of his further subsidization of the organization, managed to achieve for the constitution a total of forty-eight signatures. However, the society's members failed to exhibit anything like the independence Maclure had thought them capable of displaying. A group of them (John Beal, James Sampson, William Cox and Edward Cox) wasted no time in writing him an obsequious letter. Dated April 23, 1838, the letter contained a copy of the constitution, and asked him for his opinion of their newly

¹³Quoted in Thomas James de la Hunt (ed.) History of the New Harmony Workingmen's Institute (Evansville, Indiana: Burkart-Walton Co., 1927), p. 2.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 3-5.

formed society. The hat-in-hand manner in which the letter was phrased made it clear that the membership was counting heavily on Maclure for more than mere moral support, reminding him of his "long and continued exertions on behalf of the operatives."¹⁵

Almost five months passed with no reply from Maclure. The society decided to send him another letter. This epistle, written on September 20, 1838, was couched in terms even more cloying than the first; and, in an obvious attempt at flattery, placed his Opinions at the top of a list of more than 90 "excellent books" already acquired by purchase and donation.¹⁶

In the meantime, however, Maclure had, on August 10, 1838, and again on August 27, 1838, responded to the society's original letter. In both letters he urged as broad a membership base as possible. He offered the society the use of his 1800 volume library, and of any of his scientific instruments, and of one of his houses. But he was not about to surrender any of his possessions or property outright. Before he would even consider such a thing he wanted added to the constitution by-laws that would prevent perpetuation in office of any individuals or the quick dis-

¹⁵Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 9-11.

solution of the society with possible private gain. Fobbing the society off with the promise that when it had made the changes in its incorporation that he insisted upon, he would then "consider what other property may be useful or necessary to the fulfilling the objects of the Institute," he went on to warn against allowing his books to become "dirtied or soiled by children or careless persons."¹⁷

In a postscript to the August 10, 1838 letter, Maclure made it plain that his decade of isolation in Mexico had not extinguished his smouldering sense of injustice. He penned old familiar phrases, as he exhorted the society's membership to stand united against constant plotting by "the non-productive consuming classes" to "cajole, bribe, intrigue and dupe a part of the producers to betray the whole." He warned that the only thing that could save American workers from "becoming the slaves and serfs of an upstart monied aristocracy" was "the more equal division of a useful knowledge." But he had mellowed enough to add that it would probably be a wise move on the part of the Institute to shun the touchy subjects of religion and politics.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

The state of mail delivery being what it then was, Maclure's letters of August 10 and 27, 1838 were not read to the society until the meetings of November 11 and November 18, 1838, respectively. Once made aware of their contents, the membership responded with serf-like alacrity to the revisions he had insisted be made in their organizational plan before he would consider making them any outright gifts--thus making a mockery of his earlier encouragement of them to be capable of independent thought. On December 7, 1838, the society wrote to him that it had received his letters of August 10 and 27, 1838, and since then had "taken all necessary steps" to meet his wishes. "Everything," he was informed, that he had suggested had been done "to render the society as popular, as democratic, and as public as possible." He was further assured that his advice that the potentially explosive topics of religion and politics be avoided had also been heeded. Instead, readings were "always on some subject calculated to convey instruction;" and the Institute was characterized by "a cheerful submission to the will of the majority."¹⁹

Maclure chose Christmas Day, 1838 to again write to the society. While he noted that its library of 90 volumes had been "judiciously chosen," he also gave the first indi-

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 14, 17-18, 20.

cation that he was growing cool to the idea of becoming the sort of patron the society obviously intended him to be. He did this by first complaining of apathy on the part of the working class, and then by launching into a resume of the frustrations that class had caused him to experience in his previous attempts to play Prometheus by bringing it the Pestalozzian method. So annoying, he confessed, had the difficulties imposed by "the prejudices of parents and the opposition of school masters" made the task, that it had become for him "an Herculean labor in place of a pleasant amusement." For that reason he had, he explained, "dropped it." But now his letter took a surprising tack. Instead of drawing a wary parallel between his previous educational ventures and sponsorship of the Institute, he came up with a remarkable proposal. Describing what he termed "the great outlines of the Pestalozzian system," he went on to offer the Institute: "If you think you could manage such a school, I have no objection to enable you to make a trial; even if you should join the physical to the moral in working a farm by the children and putting them in the way of earning their bread as the surest way to independence."²⁰

However touching this evidence of the durability of

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

Maclure's faith in Pestalozzian method may be to the educational historian, the members of the Institute were anything but enthusiastic over such a proposition. They were armed not only with Maclure's self-confessed string of failed experiments, but also with the recent memory of the demise of the New Harmony schools. Yet their concern not to antagonize their potential patron, as well as their desire to obtain from him property rather than promises and advice is clearly evident in their reply to his feeler. Dated March 5, 1839, the letter began by thanking Maclure for his "kind offer" to help finance "a school on the Pestalozzian Plan." It took note of his "sincere desire to do good," in spite of all his "disappointments" with previous efforts along the same lines. Maclure was assured that there was nothing the society desired more than "a rational education" for its children, and if they could but "see a fair prospect" of carrying out his proposal, the membership would "not hesitate to set about it immediately." One trouble was, the letter continued, that all of the society's members had to work for themselves, and none were in a position to leave their present occupation to engage in a type of work they did "not well understand," especially since the "many failures in this place in schools" had shown the teaching profession "to be attended with certain expense and uncertain results."

"Notwithstanding these doubts," the letter went on, we feel confident much good may be done by your aid and our own exertions. We stand in need of a good common day school into which we could introduce as much of the Pestalozzian Plan as the teachers could be induced to adopt, and if we had the command of a good school house, we should be able to control the method of instruction. At present, we have a tolerable good day school, held in the same Hall as our Institute, but very often months have elapsed without any school whatsoever. One reason of this irregularity has been that school masters have had to rent a house and school room and after keeping a quarter or two, have found their expenses exceeding their income, perhaps from some transitory cause or caprice of parents; they have left this for some other place where they hoped to do better.

Now, Sir, had we a good and permanent house sufficient for all our wants and purposes, we believe we could remedy this evil at once. We would have proper apparatus, globes, arithmometers, blackboards, in short everything proper to admit knowledge through the medium of the senses; we would, as far as our knowledge and our means permitted, carry out your views of practical education. Such a house is No. 4, and the only one on your estate at all suited to our purpose. In it are plenty of rooms for classes, reading room and library. A lecture hall could be formed by throwing two or three rooms into one, and there would still remain plenty of room to accommodate the teacher.

But what is of more importance is the land lying behind the house unsold or otherwise specifically appropriated. Here the pupils, even of a day school might and would work when the weather permitted, raising vegetables which would help pay their schooling. We have taken the liberty to specify the house No. 4 because from your long absence we thought you might not so well know the situation of the buildings belonging to you. We should not be able to perform all we have set forth, at the beginning nor, until our means are increased, could we have such an establishment as we presume you wish us to have; but a good beginning could certainly be made, our members would increase in numbers and in zeal.²¹

Perhaps the Society's requests were a little too

²¹ Ibid., pp. 23-24.

specific, especially when contrasted with the vagueness of the projected use to which the property desired from Maclure could be put; more likely Maclure's unhappy previous experiences were the deciding factor. In any case, he wrote back on April 15, 1835, flatly refusing, at least in the immediate future, to deed any property to the Society. To justify his reluctance he noted that he had once lent costly equipment to a teacher who was to use it to conduct a school along Pestalozzian lines, only to have that teacher [Phiquepal ?] later decline to teach and claim the material as his own. To avoid any repetition of this sort of thing, and yet to assist the Society in getting itself firmly established, Maclure countered the Society's request for building No. 4 with an offer of the use of New Harmony Hall, which he had instructed his brother Alexander to have repaired.²²

So strong, however, was Maclure's desire, even at this late date, to see yet another try made at putting the Pestalozzian method into practice in American schools, that even as he rejected the Society's request for his property, he could not resist again entering a plea of his own. Describing his own efforts with his School of Industry as being "too far beyond the Knowledge of the day," he urged the Institute to make yet another attempt. Maybe by now, he

²² Ibid., pp. 26-27.

wrote, "the millions" were ready to "progress" in that direction, for until they learned to insist that "school masters . . . be obliged to understand both farming and mechanics, . . . they will not get forward."²³

The Society's membership was none too happy with Maclure's offer of the use of the Hall. It immediately authorized the sending of a letter to him in which it termed the building "dilapidated," with "the roof being in a very bad state." This missive was quickly followed by another in which the Society expressed its disappointment over his refusal to make them any outright gifts of property. No longer in any mood to figuratively tug its forelock, the Society used phrases from his own letters to refresh his memory. Had not he written to Achilles Fretageot that he was determined before he died to form a number of these Workingmen's Institutes and endow them with the necessary property to "enable them to go on and increase in utility"? And had not the New Harmony Institute's members readily accepted every single one of his strictures? The Society did not blame him for "acting with caution," but really, was it fair to draw an analogy between its membership and the anonymous and perverse school master who had proven such an ingrate? Surely Maclure could appreciate

²³ Ibid., p. 27.

the "surprise" with which the membership received his decision not to invest the Society with the fee-simple of the property immediately.²⁴

"Perhaps," the Society's letter to Maclure continued, "you do not think that we have a sufficient number of members." If so, it was he himself who had as much or more to do with that fact than any of the organization's members. He was enjoined to "please . . . recollect" that by his own advice they were "restricted to a class," and that, furthermore, one of the main reasons why the religious people of the community would not join the Society was because they took exception to some of his writings. And finally, the letter asserted, Maclure was hardly in a position to accurately judge the Society's worthiness, since he was "at a great distance," and the members of his family never visited the Society's meetings.²⁵

Had its letter to Maclure stopped here, the Society would have to be credited with making some telling points. But the tenor of its remaining passages can only have heightened Maclure's suspicions of the members' motives. For it laid bare an unseemly impatience to gain immediate possession of some part of his New Harmony property. Play-

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 28-33.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

ing on his own fears, they frankly noted that he was "far advanced in years, and wills and other documents are liable to misconstruction and open to dispute." They did not doubt, they informed him, that he intended eventually to keep his promises to make a gift to them of "all necessary accommodations," nor did they want him to think them "ungrateful for favors already received." "But," their letter continued, "we believe that aid to a society is never of so much real benefit to it as it is at the outset; many have lingered and died for want of it."²⁶

The long letter ended with a disparaging opinion on the possibility of putting the Hall in decent shape. Not receiving any reply to it from Maclure, the Institute, after a wait of more than six months, wrote to him for the last time. Perhaps fearing that their previous letter had been overly bold, this one was again, like their earlier correspondence, more wistfully supplicating than defensive and indignant in tone. It observed that working men who had "arrangements passably comfortable at home," would "not leave their firesides unless they can assemble in some place equally comfortable," which the Hall, with its "ruinous and foreboding appearance . . . on a cold winter evening" certainly was not. Nor was it any more inviting in rainy

²⁶Ibid., p. 34.

weather, for in spite of Maclure's promise that he would have his brother Alexander authorize any necessary repairs, the roof had never been fixed. They realized that Maclure might not like their harping on these supposedly mundane considerations, but they wanted him to know that experience had taught them that none of the lofty principles he had so easily induced them to adopt was of primary importance to the continued existence of the Society. What really mattered most was "a convenient, well-arranged building." Waxing philosophical, the letter opined: "It would be well if such an institution could be established in every neighborhood. It would increase the value of property, as it would raise around an intelligent and industrious population who understood their just rights and how to maintain them."²⁷

This final letter from the Society to Maclure ended with an expression of joy over the news its authors had received that he intended to visit the town in the near future. Then he would surely "see more clearly our situation;" while on their part, the membership would "endeavor to make any improvements" he might suggest.²⁸ Perhaps things might have worked out as the letter suggested. A review of Maclure's philanthropic record indicates that he was always

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 36-37.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

far more susceptible when confronted in person than when appealed to in letters. But the Society was never to get its chance at importuning him when he was unprotected by distance's shield. For on March 27, 1840, he died in Mexico City, in the house where he had spent the final twelve years of his life.

The exact cause of Maclure's death is unknown. Many of his closest acquaintances were firmly convinced that his extremely spartan diet--a holdover from the enforced privations involved in his geological expeditionary days--was responsible for his failing health and eventual death. These same people also attributed Thomas Say's death to dietary excesses. But to read any of Maclure's strictures on diet is to be convinced that here, too, as with most of his educational thought, he was in the wave of the future. Like his one-time partner Robert Owen, he was vehement in his castigation of all forms of alcohol; and, also like Owen, he took justifiable pride in his ability to get by on the very plainest fare. Actually, since Maclure had been born in the year 1763, and was therefore in his late 70's when he died, it seems somewhat surprising that the emphasis was not reversed, and that his dietary practices were not credited with adding years to his life.

In any event, not even the fact of Maclure's death was enough to convince the Workingmen's Institute that all

was lost. That there were no lasting hard feelings over his failure to have given it something in the way of tangible assets was made apparent by the assignment to one of its members of the delivery of a eulogistic address, which task was duly performed. Then, since Alexander Maclure had been named executor of his brother's estate, that gentleman was appealed to for the outright gift of the Hall. The appeal was rejected, but at the same time Alexander promised that the Society could continue to use the Hall for its meetings.

No more satisfied with Alexander's solution than they had been when William had offered them the same thing, on October 11, 1841 the Society sent a memorial to Alexander and his sister Ann. The memorial explained that the Society, "induced by the liberal offers of your deceased brother, . . . associated themselves together for the purpose of Mutual Instruction." It went on to describe William's promise to "endow them with a house and land and other necessaries to make a beginning." Every single one of William's requirements had been "punctually fulfilled." If Alexander would but "examine our records and each of our acts as a public body," he "could not but consider the proceedings of the Society as in accordance with the views of Our Founder, and likely to produce much good." Pulling out all the stops, the epistle even made use of the keep-

the-boys-off-the-streets theme, as in a modern sounding passage it noted that "many of the Society are young men under twenty and might otherwise spend their time in useless or injurious pursuits."²⁹

Having thus stated its case, the Society's memorial to Alexander and Ann Maclure concluded with the following plea:

Being exceedingly desirous of feeling that we are established on a permanent basis, in a locality of our own; feeling assured from the liberality you have already fitted up the building for our use, that it was by you also intended for the Society; . . . that we may feel secure in adding to the apparatus and the property generally; we respectfully submit to you the suggestion whether you would not be carrying out Mr. Maclure's intentions by leaving or deeding the East wing of the Hall to our Trustees and their successors in office; for the use of the Working Men's Institute, so long as it continues to be conducted in strict accordance with the Constitution and Charter.³⁰

Although the Society's demands had become more circumscribed than they had once been, Alexander and Ann remained cold to its request. A week after its memorial had been dispatched to the Maclures, the Society's minutes contained the terse statement that "In reference to foregoing memorial, J. Shier reports Mr. A. Maclure as not favorable." The minutes also noted the appointment of a committee to confer with Alexander about leasing the east

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 41-42.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 42.

wing.³¹

Even leasing proved a problem. Alexander's answer to the committee's inquiry was that he "had no right to lease the premises, but he wished the Society to have confidence in him." To this the committee replied that "there were some rooms which required to be fitted up, for which the members seemed unwilling to advance any more money lest they should be ejected." Alexander again assured the committee they had nothing to fear on that score, promising them, "You never shall be disturbed by me." Still the committee was unconvinced. One of its members, a Mr. J. Beal, wanted Ann Maclure's assurance as well. He contacted her and received the same promise her brother had given, "that there was no wish or intention to disturb the Institute or interfere with their arrangements."³²

Forced to rely on Alexander and Ann Maclure's sufferance for the use of its meeting place, the Institute did not prosper. Yet, in spite of everything, the fact that William Maclure's spirit still held sway within the organization was evinced when on November 14, 1841 use of the lecture room for preaching was refused.³³ And though the dream that

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., pp. 42-43.

³³ Ibid., p. 43.

this Institute would be but the first model of many such organizations faded through the years, the Society managed to remain in existence, in spite of the fact that it never had acquired the ownership of any property, a condition once deemed so vital by its members.

Then, in the 1890's the sort of benefactor the Society had once hoped William Maclure might be came along in the person of Dr. Edward Murphy. In 1826 Dr. Murphy had wandered into New Harmony as a homeless orphan of thirteen, and had been accepted by the community and enrolled in Maclure's School of Industry. Always grateful to the town, when he prospered as a doctor Murphy looked for ways in which to repay the citizenry for the help it had once given him. He chose the Workingmen's Institute as his particular charity, and contributed considerable sums of money and gifts of property to insure its future. Clearly, it is to Dr. Murphy, far more than to William Maclure and his heirs, that credit must be given for the fact that the New Harmony Workingmen's Institute has been, as the Institute's biographer has noted, "the one feature in the town whose vital functions have come down without a break from the communal experiment period."³⁴ From Dr. Murphy the Institute received contributions that

³⁴ Ibid., (foreward).

totaled well over \$150,000; while the entire Maclure family, in the final analysis, gave it only its initial inspiration, \$1,000 worth of books, and a rent-free place in which to hold its meetings.

XXII

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY: MACLURE'S LEGACIES

The New Harmony experiment had shown Maclure a fearful example in the form of the plight of Robert Owen, who had expended the major portion of his considerable fortune on various reforms only to eventually find himself financially dependent upon others. It should not, therefore, be too surprising that William spent the last dozen years of his life rejecting investment in all reformative ventures that he suspected might prove expensive. And in his defense it must be remembered that he had not completely turned his back on reform. As his life waned, he gave more and more thought to the matter in which his wealth would be distributed upon his death. For a time he planned to leave all his property in trust to the Academy of Natural Science back in Philadelphia. His protracted absence had not prevented his serving as president of that organization ever since December 31, 1817. And after Thomas Say's death in 1834, Maclure had arranged for his library at New Harmony to be transferred to the Academy. But he came to suspect that too many of its members were "sticklers for the propagation of religion," which aim was, he frankly admitted,

"the last use I could wish my money put to."¹ Still, in 1837, he presented the Academy with \$5,000 to enable it to liquidate its debts. But when the Academy raised its entrance fee and made its annual dues ten dollars it became, in Maclure's eyes, "a monopoly in favor of the rich;"² whereupon he rescinded that provision in his will which had left everything to it in trust.

However, despite his concern that his final decisions respecting the disposal of his property after his death not be thwarted, the final product of all William's revisions did not prevent exactly that from happening. Surely he must have realized that none of the surviving members of his immediate family had an interest in social and educational reforms that came anywhere near matching his own. Yet, in disappointingly prosaic fashion, he chose to leave "the use and revenue of all his property, real and personal, in and about New Harmony" to his brother Alexander and his sisters Ann and Margaret during their lifetimes. The property was to be "equally divided amongst

¹Letter from William Maclure to the Academy of Natural Science: October 1, 1836 (In the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia).

²Letter from William Maclure to the Academy of Natural Science: June 15, 1839 (In the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia).

them, and under the management of said Ann and Alexander Maclure."³

Although William's will further provided that upon each of his three heirs' deaths, whatever remained of the share in question was to then "be applied for the diffusion of useful knowledge and instruction among the institutes, libraries, clubs or meetings of the working classes, or manual laborers who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, . . ."⁴ the net result was eminently predictable. Aside from the one major philanthropic bequest William made in his will--and even it became entangled in considerable litigation--there is no record that any of his estate ever trickled back into reformatory channels after the deaths of his immediate heirs. And the struggle involved in getting them to adhere to the one program he had spelled out in detail indicates quite clearly their extreme recalcitrance to see the slightest portion of their brother's considerable fortune dissipated on such ephemeral projects as the melioration of the plight of the workingman.

William's last testament had directed that his executors should donate the sum of \$500 out of his property

³Thomas de la Hunt (ed.), History of the New Harmony Workingmen's Institute (Evansville, Indiana: Bunkert-Walton Co., 1927), p. 46.

⁴Ibid., p. 47.

"to any club or society of laborers who may establish in any part of the United States, a reading and lecture room with a library of at least one hundred volumes."⁵ However, Alexander and Ann Maclure, having received the opinion of their lawyers that, since it referred to bodies not already in existence, the trust was void, decided not to honor it. It took an alert and persevering young attorney, Alvin P. Hovey, who later became Governor of Indiana, to force the reluctant executors to carry out their deceased brother's instructions. Having a different opinion of the law than did the executors' lawyers, Hovey instituted proceedings to have Alexander and Ann displaced. The case was carried all the way to the Supreme Court, where Hovey won out, and became himself the administrator of the remainder of the estate. It was finally converted into available funds, and in 1855 the distribution began.⁶

This distribution took place over a period of four years. Altogether 144 associations in Indiana and 16 more in Illinois received donations, which meant that \$80,000 of William's estate was spent on them, making it easy to understand why his heirs had not been at all anxious to

⁵J. P. Dunn, The Libraries of Indiana (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Burford, 1893), p. 13.

⁶Ibid.

fulfill this particular provision of the will. The associations were almost all formed for the purpose of getting the \$500 donation, and there was little else to hold them together once it had been awarded. In each case the recipients were required to show that they were members of the working class, and that they had complied with the provision for collecting a library of one hundred volumes. However, in almost every instance, the latter condition was met by assembling collections of old books hastily gathered together and of little practical value. In most cases the books were finally divided and became the individual property of the members; and of the entire 160 libraries funded only the one at New Harmony was successful and permanent.⁷

Even with the \$80,000 dent eventually made in the total by the donations to the workingmen's libraries, Alexander, Ann, and Margaret Maclure each came into a quite sizeable inheritance. A \$300 a year annuity to Thomas Say's widow, Lucy, was the only other encumbrance on an estate that included: over a million reales in Spanish securities; extensive property holdings in New Harmony; a house in

⁷ Ibid., p. 15. See also: J. P. Dunn, "Growth of Libraries in Indiana Since 1807," The Indianapolis News, April 12, 1907; and William E. Wilson, The Angel and the Serpent (Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1964), pp. 188-89.

Alicante; a convent with an accompanying estate of ten thousand acres in Valencia; another convent and estate at Grosmano; an estate at Carmen de Croix; the valley of Murada; 41,000 francs in French securities; notes and mortgages on properties scattered from Big Lick plantation in Virginia to various parts of England, France, and Spain; a vast collection of minerals and prints; and almost two thousand copper plates of engraving and illustrations. So in the end the man who had so coldly castigated the family as an inefficient and overrated institution, wound up by providing nicely for the remaining members of his own.

Apparently, in spite of their windfall from brother William, none of the three surviving members of the Maclure family ever married. Unlike the names of Owen, Fretageot, and Neef, whose descendants dot the pages of New Harmony history right up to the present time, the name Maclure does not. Yet the disadvantage of not having had direct descendants to uphold his reputation has not really hurt William's historical image. On the contrary, those works which have delved with any depth into the history of the communitarian experiment at New Harmony have unfailingly compared him with his more famous partner to the latter's disadvantage--and the burden of this work has been to indicate that this judgment is just.

The truly meaningful legacy of William Maclure was

certainly not his bequests to prospective workingmen's libraries, nor his unceasing efforts at "proselytizing the Pestalozzian," nor his scientific endeavors, nor any other of his various philanthropies. Rather it is the example he offers of a life fully examined and even more fully lived. His friend Benjamin Silliman was right when he noted of Maclure that he devoted his life "with untiring energy and singular disinterestedness to the attainment and diffusion of practical knowledge," and that "no views of pecuniary advantage, or personal aggrandizement entered into the motives by which he was governed."⁸

Professor Silliman could have also added that Maclure strove mightily to strip away all manner of pretentiousness, whether of institutions, customs, or human behavior. He wanted everyone, himself included, to see things as they really were; only then could logic take precedence over those traditions and superstitions that had so entwined themselves in all phases of existence as to stifle all hope of human progress.

For the most part, Maclure was superb at his self-appointed task, managing to delineate with far greater clarity than almost any of his contemporaries several of

⁸The quotation appears in Samuel G. Morton, A Memoir of William Maclure, Esq. (Philadelphia: T. K. & P. G. Collins, 1841), p. 28.

the key problems facing a world that was moving inexorably toward an industrialized existence. In the first place, he recognized that such a trend was already too far under way to allow the possibility of ever turning back to that romanticized vision of bucolic bliss conjured up by some as an alternative. Instead, Maclure wanted industrialization's potentialities, both for good and evil, closely and dispassionately examined, so that its worst consequences could be either avoided or at least minimized, while the material advantages it was capable of providing could be utilized to achieve that human progress he believed eventually attainable.

It was actually within the framework of this larger speculation that Maclure came upon specific problems and insights as meaningful today as they were then. His disgust with the institutions of church, school, and family were closely connected with, if not inspired by, the inadequacy and illogic of the response of these institutions to industrialism and all it portended. Relevance is not a word that enjoyed currency in his day, but had it done so, it is surely one of which he would have made great use. One of the major indictments against religion even today is its failure to come to grips with the here and now; schools are being excoriated with ever increasing frequency for the irrelevant and obsolescent nature of so much of the material

in their curriculums; sociologists and even whole societies are beginning to question whether the family unit as it is now constituted is really the best foundation on which to build a society which continues to accelerate toward complete industrialization: all of these lines of reasoning are echoes of thoughts Maclure expressed so pithily a century and a half ago.

Maclure's stringent criticisms of what passed for educational orthodoxy in his day have, for the most part, become today's truisms. Some of his convictions were derived from his observation of the work of Pestalozzi and other educational reformers; others were the result of his negative reaction to the traditional education he himself had undergone. That none of the educational innovations he came to endorse actually originated with him should not detract overly much from the fact that in this area, too, his ideas have stood the test of time amazingly well. That subject matter should have its roots in the student's environment, and that it should above all be able to stand the test of relevance; that motivation is the most vital element in the educative process; that the use of fear and coercion demean and, in the end, defeat the entire educational process by making learning tedious, if not downright hateful; that the pupil's voice should not only be heard, but really listened to for keys as to what should be studied;

that teachers should reject the debilitating notion that they must be omnipotent and invariably correct; that curriculums should be flexible and infinitely varied; that wherever possible the real thing, and not merely some word picture of it, should be examined: all these educational ideas Maclure espoused and encouraged, and there are few educators today who would disagree with a single one of them.

Even more prescient was his emphasis on strengthening the interrelatedness between one's school work and one's life, with curriculums being shaped so as to connect the two in the most logical and practical ways possible. Thus when the Russians as recently as 1959 announced as one of their major educational goals the elimination of the separation of school work from life, they were endorsing a guideline Maclure had fervently advocated more than 130 years before.

However, for all his excellent record of clarity in educational thought, it is as a trenchant observer and commentator on fundamental social patterns that Maclure deserves the most attention. His scathing and pertinent scrutiny of church, school and family have already been noted. Even today, men who express strong criticisms and doubts of any of these three more or less hallowed institutions are usually considered anti-establishment iconoclasts. Yet there was Maclure, in a time when all three institutions

enjoyed an almost unquestioned approbation, arguing in the frankest terms that none of them were worth saving. Nor was he, unlike all too many social critics, devoid of alternatives. His solutions may not have been any better, or even as good as what he wanted done away with, but at least he had something to offer. In place of supernatural religion, he posited what can only be termed an alternative religion--that of faith in man's rationality and the power of education to assure human progress. For traditional schools, he wanted to substitute schools that would deal with conditions as they existed. As for the family, he believed that a society constituted along the lines of Plato's Republic or a modern day kibbutz could do a much more efficient job of child rearing.

Maclure's attitude toward what he believed were verities of economic life was every bit as uncompromising as was his criticism of society's major institutions. More than twenty years before Karl Marx and Frederick Engel issued their famous manifesto urging the workers of the world to unite and to seize the means of production into their own hands, Maclure was painting a picture of a world sharply divided into producers and non-producers, whose interests were diametrically opposed to one another. Unlike his softer-minded fellow reformer, Robert Owen, Maclure had absolutely no illusions that the non-producers (for whom

the Marxian label "capitalists" may be substituted without semantic damage), would ever surrender one whit of their power or privilege voluntarily. He further concluded, as did Marx and Engel, that the only way the working classes would ever obtain their fair share of what they produced was by somehow acquiring control of the means of production. Not only that, he saw with them--actually before them--the unholy alliance that existed among the upper classes and the institutions they controlled--an alliance that had throughout history succeeded in preventing the vast majority from achieving anything like its due. His rhetoric might not have matched that of Marx and Engel in revolutionary ardor, but that was not because he did not see the same alignments of power and interlocking interests that they did. Again, like them, rather than his more messianic and millennialistic contemporaries, he saw the struggle between the classes as an uncompromising and long one. In a way, he was even more tough-minded than were Marx and Engel: for he was never certain--as they were--of the inevitability of the workers' triumph. He was sanguine enough to hope that the spread of the franchise would lead in turn to legislation insuring the free education of the multitude, which would eventually mean an electorate informed enough to demand laws in its own best interest; thus, the diffusion of knowledge would lead to the diffusion of wealth. This

was what he hoped would happen. But he saw, too, the possibility that his vision of this triangular foundation for the society of the future might, given the upper classes' stubborn and all-pervasive resistance to change, come into being in a far more spectacular fashion--as the result of bloody revolution. Such a revolution, if it did come, would be, Maclure thought, all the more tragic, because it would be the result, not of those inexorable economic forces Marxian dogma posited, but rather of the intransigence and greed of those in power. However, as far as Maclure was concerned, if that was the way society had to be changed, maybe it was not such a bad way after all. From what he had observed of history, revolutions, however bloody, had a way of leaving the masses better off than they had been before; and the haves who had brought them on by their ruthless coldness to the privations and frustrations of the have-nots, richly deserved their fate.

Yet for all his determination to get at the bare essentials of life, Maclure was too much a product of his time not to be guilty of considerable self-deception. Certainly he too often found the temptation to assume the mantle of the all-knowing sage too strong to resist. Nor was he at heart adverse to paradoxically playing the role of the grand patron to the masses--even as he repeatedly warned them that they should not expect any assistance from

those who were not of their own class. But by far his most glaring oversight, one he shared with Robert Owen and other reformers of his day, was his complete failure to try to come to grips with--or even to admit the existence of--the irrational side of man's nature. Maclure was always referring to man as a rational being, one who might for a time be confused as to what was truly in his best interest, but for whom a proper, common-sense type education would eventually eliminate that problem. He accepted completely the utilitarian argument that all that was necessary to insure human progress was that everyone perceive and act in a manner which was truly consistent with his self-interest.

Today, with cults and entire mass movements not above exalting the irrational to the level of the highest wisdom, it is hard indeed to understand how anyone, especially someone as dedicated as Maclure was to stripping life of its pretensions, could ignore a factor so potent in human affairs. But Maclure lived in an age that, for all its problems, was characterized by faith in the idea of progress. Had he been less contemptuous of the study of history, perhaps he might have also been a bit less susceptible to the intellectual temper of his time. Unfortunately for the overall ability of his social thought to claim serious attention today, this blind spot does exist.

Still, who can say whether or not a fuller awareness of man's perverse, illogical, and self-destructive propensities might have produced in Maclure the sort of paralysis of the will that presently is so prevalent among those of introspective bent. Even as one deems quixotic the battles fought by a man like Maclure on behalf of such idealistic concepts as rational man and human progress, one also longs for the sort of lost innocence that allowed him to enroll himself under such ideological banners. Few enlistees in the cause of fundamental social reforms have been as bold, as constant, and as thoroughly involved as he. He deserves far more attention from history than ever he gave it.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by William Frank Kipnis has been read and approved by members of the Department of Education.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that all necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

March 21, 1972
Date

Gerald A. Gustaf
Signature of Advisor